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FAMILY SERMONS.

BY THE
REV. E. W. WHITAKER,

LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD :
NOW RECTOR OF ST. MILDRED'S AND ALL SAINTS,
CANTERBURY.

VOL. III.

" FEED MY SHEEP."

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TO THE

THIRD VOLUME.

SINCE from the uncertainty of the time at which the course may be entered on by different readers, it was impossible the four occasional Sermons on the Spring, the Harvest, the Nativity, and the Crucifixion, should be properly placed in it, they are inserted before the concluding Discourse, that the reader may turn to and introduce them at the proper season, without further interrupting the general line. For the Authour has to request, that, as the whole course was composed with a view to its being regularly gone through, his readers would, not only in justice to the work, but for the purpose of rendering the contents of it more

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easy to be understood and retained, take that mode of reading it, in lieu of selecting each Sunday that Discourse which may strike the idea of the moment.

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SERMON I.

ON PURITY.

I PETER II. 11.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

IN the discourses lately read to you on the SERM.
personal vices they have been considered, I.
as they impel us to injure those connected
with us in society; but since some who are
unwilling to part with forbidden indul-
gences, deceive themselves by imagining,
that they so manage their intemperance, as
to hurt not their neighbours, and would
persuade others of the harmlessness of their
conduct; it is necessary further to reflect,
whether compliance with any inordinate
VOL. III. B desire

SERM. desire does not naturally hurt the person
 I. guilty of it ; and whether these desires do
 not, in the words of the text, war against
 the soul ?

The character in which the apostle here considers Christians, supplies an argument for the conduct he has enjoined, which is by no means sufficiently attended to. Were men like the brutes that perish, designed only for this life, had they nothing farther to look to than this earthly habitation, admonitions against indulgence here could not justly be pressed beyond such restraint as is necessary to keep them from trespassing on others, or bringing temporal damage on themselves. But this being what might properly be termed a place of education for another state, in which our everlasting situation will be according to the spiritual improvement we have acquired here, and all who will not follow holiness being expressly debarred from entrance into the happiness and glories of the future life, it is evident, that to discover the measure of abstinence


necessary here, we must consider, what SERM.
neglect of it will operate to our exclusion I.
from honour and felicity hereafter: and
from the fact of our being only pilgrims
and strangers on earth, manifestly arises the
consequence of worldly desires and fleshly
lusts warring against the soul.


Neither has this consequence, though
not sufficiently regarded by some who
reckon themselves among the faithful, been
always overlooked by the more avowed
patrons of vice; they have seen, that there
is something which justice requires should
be punished, in creatures to whom their
Maker hath given understanding, and a
consciousness that they ought to obey its
dictates; acting in direct opposition to those
dictates, and putting themselves under the
sole government of their appetites. They
have perceived, that evil consequences might
be dreaded from a man's having his heart
replete with foul desires, and his mind
crowded with loose and impure images;
and that the common sense of mankind

SERM. will suggest a fear, that those who become
 I. slaves to their lusts, are laying up to themselves a stock of misery for the whole future duration of their existence. To counteract, therefore, the impression of these things on the human mind, they have propagated the doctrine, that no other state is to be expected after this, and endeavoured to
 * make the multitude believe, that death is an eternal sleep.

And should not this acknowledgement alarm the Christian transgressor for the soundness of his reasoning, when he argues, that if he injure not others by it, the gratification of his appetites cannot bring him into condemnation? Should it not influence him to consider, what is the common ground on which an apostle of Christ declares, and the votaries of sin are induced to confess, that fleshly lusts war against the soul?

The effects of indulgence are sufficiently visible in the world, and human experience
 amply

amply proves the almost unconquerable SERM.
power of habit. Observe to how dis- I.
graceful a state of impotence men are often 
reduced by the former of these; how in-
capable do they become of supporting, with
decent fortitude, the least disappointment;
by what trifling circumstances are they
stung with vexation! What an absurd
anxiety do they betray about things not
worth a moment's care! and such is the
debility of mind which they have con-
tracted, that even from the enjoyment of
their favourite objects, they receive but a
peevish pleasure! and now consider, what
a preparation is such a debilitated state of
soul, such a contracted restlessness, and un-
satisfied disposition for entrance into that
heavenly society, of which we are taught
the real followers of Christ shall be ad-
mitted members. But if indulgence in
particulars, not criminal perhaps in them-
selves, which partake not of uncleanness,
to which no impurity is attached, thus
weakens the powers of the soul, What
injury must she receive from practices, at

SERM. the very commencement of which, her
 I. sense of right and wrong is forcibly opposed, and in the course of them her moral taste gradually vitiated by repeated submission to the lusts of the flesh! That carnal gratifications do in fact debase men's minds, turn them from noble pursuits, bias their reasonings, and obscure their understandings, a little attentive observation will convince you.

Mark to what meanneſſes ſome who in other reſpects manifeſt an high ſpirit, and are indeed men of great pride, will ſubmit; with what companions they will diſgrace themſelves, to what inſults they will ſtoop, of what diſſimulation they will be guilty, when once enſlaved by their inordinate deſires. We ſee the moſt honourable pursuits given up, the nobleſt proſpects in life relinquished, the cloſeſt connections broken off, and the neareſt, and thoſe which ought to be the deareſt relatives, neglected, for the ſake of undiſturbed indulgence in ſome baſe gratification, of wallowing without
inter-

interruption, like the sow in her mire. SERM.
Yet did any man, think ye, ever begin his I.
vicious course with intent to submit to such
thralldom? No; having formed a plan of
proceeding no further in transgression than,
he absurdly imagined, would, under his
own particular circumstances, admit of ex-
cuse: thinking to continue under the re-
straints of reason practices which he com-
menced contrary to all reason; he yielded
to the dominion of passion; and when he
wanted to resume the command of him-
self, found he had made masters of those
he meant to be his slaves. Conscious of
his degraded situation, and fearing, or hurt,
that others should remark it, his generous
love of praise, and dread of disgrace, are
contracted into a peevish jealousy lest his
character should be reflected on, and the
native vigour of his mind is lost, scarcely
or never to be recovered.

Behold, then, how in this sense fleshly
lusts war against the soul, by bringing it
into a bondage so severe, that although their

SERM. victims see the evil tendency of their own
I. conduct, though they feel its bad effects
on their reputation, their health, or their
circumstances, though distress, poverty, and
ruin, stare them in the face, unable to re-
strain desires, the great impetuosity of which
arose from their being at first cherished,
they are driven forward to the afflictions
which they foresaw, only after they had
deprived themselves of the power of pre-
venting them. And must not minds thus
enfeebled, souls thus debased, be hopeful
candidates for glory in a future state, where
our qualifications for an honourable station
will be judged of by the fidelity we have
shewn in using the powers entrusted to us
here: and our fitness to have any thing of
our own, by the use we have hitherto made
of that which was another's? It is not,
therefore, the present ease and honour of
the soul only against which carnal appetites
militate, but against her future dignity,
her everlasting happiness.

To

To descry, however, still more ample SERM.
evidence of this, let us more accurately ^{I.}
consider the habits contracted by those who
are led away by inordinate desires, and the
natural effects of those habits. We may
take the instance in any kind of wicked-
ness; the world will afford us examples of
every sort. Observe, then, a man who has
yielded to the love of gain. See him not
ceasing from his endeavours to accumulate,
when he has acquired sufficient to provide
himself during the longest term of days for
which he can hope in this world, not only
the necessaries and conveniences, but even
the luxuries of life; but denying himself
all those gratifications as the means of
which only riches themselves are desirable:
toiling day and night, undergoing labour of
which his self complains, to heap up wealth
which he is conscious he can never enjoy:
while neither the perpetual anxiety he suf-
fers, nor his sense of the contemptible
figure he exhibits, nor his dread of the
fearful judgments of Him who has by His
apostle declared, that covetousness is idola-
try,

SERM. try, can prevail on him to relinquish his
I. habits of parsimony, or desist from the
pursuit of lucre.

Or, turn your attention to the votaries of pleasure and dissipation; mark the force of the habits they have acquired; against which neither the admonitions of friendship, the ties of natural affection, the dread of want, nor the sanctions of religion, avail. Or, consider the situation of those whose wretched state calls still more loudly for observation, those, I mean, who abandon themselves to the most profligate pursuit of both pleasure and profit in the vice of gaming. Among these ye may see persons even of that sex whose more tender affections and delicate feelings would, we might suppose, revolt at plans of ruin and scenes of treachery, relinquish the domestick attachments, and become so hardened by custom, that neither the rebukes of those to whose words they are bound to listen, nor the calls of parental duty, nor remorse for contributing to pierce the hearts of others

others with affliction, nor even the publick indignation and contempt, can induce them to refrain from giving their honour unto others, and their years unto the cruel ; from letting strangers be filled with their wealth ; and the labours of their husbands or their ancestors be in the house of a stranger ; until they mourn at the last, when their flesh and their bodies are consumed. But as the habits of vice are obstinate, so are their effects forcible : among the first of these may be ranked a disinclination to every better pursuit, a decrease of horror at further degrees of guilt, and necessarily, a dislike to all moral instruction and all the truths of religion. Neither is this the utmost of their extent ; for as the views of the soul are debased, so is the light of the understanding obscured ; the quickness of the conception being blunted, and the soundness of the judgement vitiated. Hence the vain babblings of the profligate against the doctrines of the Gospel, the nonsensical arguments they run through to persuade themselves and others, that they may sin, and

no

SERM.

I.



SERM. no harm happen unto them : hence their
I. contemptible credulity in the cases of so
many false pretenders to knowledge ; hence
the readiness with which they embrace the
French philosophy ; hence their dislike to
the sacred writings, their neglect of the
assemblies of the church, and their aversion
from hearing that they have souls, which,
indeed, are not in the road to salvation.

Thus doth sin block up every path to
amendment, and obstruct every avenue to
repentance so completely, that though the
Lord be constantly working around them,
those who yield themselves in bondage to
fleshly lusts cannot perceive Him, until He
speak to them in thunder. The pure in
heart only can see God. It is no matter of
surprise, therefore, if those whose hearts
are replete with foul imaginations, and
whose inclinations set upon the low enjoy-
ments of the earth, cannot comprehend how
it should be His will that men should live
soberly, righteously, and godly, or that
none should partake of His salvation, or be
admitted

admitted to His kingdom, who is not SERM.
cleansed from all iniquity. No wonder if I.
those who can figure to themselves no future
happiness for which it is worth while to
abstain from the gratification of the bodily
appetites at present, can form no idea of a
state of perfect bliss, from whence all their
favourite pleasures are banished. But it is
manifest, that if men of such habits were
even admitted into the society of the blessed
above, far from deriving satisfaction from
the pure employments and spiritual conver-
sation of such, the holiness of their com-
panions would be a reproach unto them,
and the absence of every object in which
they were accustomed to find pleasure,
would make Heaven itself no Heaven to
them. And thus again, do fleshly lusts
war against the soul !

Having hitherto enquired how the lusts
of the flesh war against the soul by affect-
ing its powers, rendering it unfit for the
dignity and honours of a future state of
glory, and incapable of participating in the
happi-

SERM. happiness of that heavenly kingdom, even
I. were it admitted to an inheritance therein,
let us consider, how they do the same by
leading men to transgress the divine com-
mandments.

That every kind of impurity, even that of thought, is forbidden by the Gospel, I need not go about to prove; nor that obedience to the laws of God is a specified condition of our attaining to the life of the world to come. Ye scarcely need be reminded of our blessed Lord's answer to him who asked, what good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments:" or of His comparison of every one that heareth His sayings, and doeth them not, to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: neither of His apostle's declaration, which both states plainly what are the works of the flesh, and the penalty on doing them. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

ousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, herefies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

After denunciations so plain and positive as these, whence can arise the absurd imagination, that any thing less than sincerely breaking off our sin by repentance can prevent our being excluded from that glorious inheritance, unless it be from the pernicious suggestion of the same tempter who said unto the first woman, when she urged the divine prohibition of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “Ye shall not surely die?” In listening to this assurance of the father of lies, she daringly and ungratefully charged her Creatour and only Benefactor with unkindly laying a needless restraint on the works of His own hands: and doth not every man who, either by word or action, denies the necessity or import-

SERM. importance of the Gospel-precepts of purity,
 I. in like manner charge God foolishly? Does
 he not withdraw himself from the protection of his Maker, and madly signify, that he can look better to himself? Whether men will own it, whether they see it or not, this is in reality the declaration which they make when they knowingly transgress the divine commandments; and whether, after that, they will be admitted to partake in the divine promises, or be delivered from the wrath to come through His protection, whose guidance they have already despised, they may judge from past occurrences.

All the wretched reasonings of the profligate in excuse for his offences might have been urged by our first parents; their sin, they might have said, would hurt nobody but themselves: and the Devil his self had suggested to them, that there was no great danger in venturing to indulge their appetites; still the threatened sentence overtook them, and the loss of Paradise and immortality immediately followed that of innocence,

cence. And whose personal experience contradicts this lesson? Reason from what comes daily before you. Will your bodies continue in health without care? If ye conceive that without your making use of the powers He has given you, your Creator will preserve you from disorders, have ye not hourly proofs of the contrary? How many are now lamenting their own folly in not more carefully attending to the admonitions they received in their younger days, not to lay up for themselves pain and sickness in their old age! And how vain do all their lamentations prove to assuage their sufferings? Apply this reasoning to the case of your souls: perpetually are ye reproved, rebuked, exhorted and called upon a thousand ways, not to do those things in this state, which will bring misery on you in the next; and if ye continue deaf to all the motives (so much more weighty than that of avoiding bodily and temporary sufferings) which are urged to persuade you to refrain from what will prove your condemnation hereafter, will not the permitting

SERM.
I.
~~~~~

SERM. you to suffer the evils with which ye were

I. threatened, be a dispensation of the same justice, which leaves the careless in regard to the health of their bodies, to undergo the consequences of their own folly? Or who can deliver you from these sad consequences but He who is Lord, as of this, so of the world to come? And is not this He, whose service, those who follow fleshly lusts, have neglected, whose commandments they have trampled under foot, and whose promises and threatenings they have equally despised?

This particular of our being, by right of creation, servants of God, and our having been again made so by the being purchased with the blood of Christ, seems to be strangely forgotten by many who profess themselves Christians: for, surely, they cannot be ignorant, that it is expected in a servant that he be found faithful. Yet what is his fidelity, who, instead of honestly exerting his abilities, and employing his time in his master's service, wastes both in  
riotous

riotous living? What is theirs who never SERM.  
think but accidentally of their connection I.  
with their Lord, and render Him only the  
forms of homage? Who, instead of seriously applying their minds to consider what work He hath appointed for them, or how they may most acceptably perform His charge, do, by spending their days between idleness and diversion, prove that they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? When men consider only their temporal evils which the pursuit of their pleasures may bring on them, and indulge themselves as far as they can without incurring these, they plainly manifest a total disregard to the divine censure and approbation: and thus, by bringing them into the condemnation of those who love not God, and obey not the Gospel of Christ, do their lusts war against their souls.

The multitude of victims to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, warrants a presumption, that men are easily drawn aside by these enemies

SERM. of their salvation, and thus manifests the  
I. necessity of exerting all the powers of self-  
restraint which we possess: as well on account of the encroaching nature of vice, as of the proofs hereby afforded of the frequent execution of the divine menace, that from him who uses it not, shall be taken away even the little grace he has. Is it not, from this desertion and deprivation of the divine illumination and assistance, that we see such instances of abandoned vice? Surely it is through this that so many are deaf to every admonition, dead to all shame of their profligacy; and though they feel the divine judgements beginning to fall on them, in the disgrace, the diseases, the distresses they undergo, proceed with seeming fearlessness to draw down final condemnation on themselves. Surely it is through the gradual diminution of the true light in the breasts of the wicked as their provocations encrease, that we see such encreasing difference between one who continues in innocence, and another who embarks in sin. Compare two females who have taken these

these different courses. I do not mean ye SERM.  
should single the instance of vice from the I.  
outcasts of society, common prostitutes :  
there are, alas ! sufficient instances without  
descending to them : and ye will see in the  
one such an acquired blindness to the evils  
that hang over her, such insensibility of  
the criminality of having yielded to fleshly  
lusts, such a loss of that delicacy and de-  
cency of sentiment which remain unim-  
paired in the other, as will suffer you no  
longer to doubt, whether in this sense too  
fleshly lusts do not war against the soul.  
Or, lastly, compare two persons of these  
opposite characters in their last scene in this  
life ; I mean their death beds : and examine  
whether there be no difference in their hopes  
and in their qualifications for crowns of  
everlasting life and glory in another state.  
Consider which has passed as a pilgrim  
through this world, and appears going to  
receive from that Lord for whose sake he  
suffered affliction and reproach, the reward  
of a faithful servant, that of admission into  
the joy of his Master ; and which has no-  
c 3 thing

SERM. thing but despair remaining : and see the  
I. soul of one rising triumphant as the departure from the body approaches ; and that of the other already dead in trespasses and sin, expecting nothing but everlasting death from his past submission to fleshly lusts. And as ye would prefer the former of these situations, endeavour to preserve, or gain purity of heart. Every breach in which, ye have seen, rapidly encreases, admitting a train of evil desires, which, spite of the ignorance or sophistry of those who, according to the hardness of their hearts, heap up for themselves indignation against the day of the just judgement of God, do really war against the soul : assured, that although Heaven and earth pass away, the words of Christ shall not pass away, but this declaration of His apostle stand fast for ever, “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord ! ”

## SERMON II.

ON THEFT AND FRAUD.

---

EPHES. IV. 28.

*Let him that stole steal no more : but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

IF we may judge of the general state of SERM.  
morals in the ancient Heathen world, by II.  
the nefarious crimes countenanced and practised by those who have ever been esteemed the wisest and best among their philosophers, most wretched must it have been, indeed, at the time when the disciples of Christ went forth, and preached among the nations the necessity of repentance unto life.

SERM. There existed, it is true, laws in the several  
II. communities for the security of the persons  
and property of men : but when the grossest  
impurities were encouraged by the pretended examples of their feigned gods, and the actual practice of their most esteemed teachers, the licentiousness of the lower ranks in the gratification of their passions, must have been such as to have placed multitudes of them in perpetual need of those supplies which sober labour alone can give ; and we know, from what we at present see in the world, that those who are abandoned to sensual pleasures, are often not very nice as to the means by which they provide themselves money for their extravagance. The suggestion thrown out in the text, therefore, that before their embracing christianity, the crime of theft was among the Gentile converts neither uncommon, nor deemed so heinous as in truth it is, is accounted for by circumstances that must in all probability have existed, and also have called for the precept that contains it, “ Let him that stole steal no more.”

And,



And, I would I could add, that the necessity SERM.  
of reminding Christians that there is such II.  
a commandment ceased with that genera-  
tion! But, alas! such on the one hand is  
the want of a just notion of the sacredness  
of property, and on the other the hypocrisy  
of men, in calling Christ Lord and Master,  
while they pay little or no regard to His  
words, that even this commandment is  
transgressed by multitudes among us: and  
it is requisite to represent to them, both the  
guilt of theft, and that various practices  
which they are accustomed to disguise with  
a better name, do in truth partake of it.  
This then I shall endeavour to do before  
you in the following discourse, adding to  
the observations necessary for this purpose,  
some on the means of avoiding all tempta-  
tion to dishonesty, and of enabling ourselves  
to be useful instead of mischievous mem-  
bers of society, recommended by the apostle  
in the text, “ But rather let him labour,  
working with his hands the thing which  
is good, that he may have to give to him  
that needeth.”

Now

SERM.

II.

away the property of others against the will of the owners, fully to discover the guilt of it, we must consider the sacredness of property; which arises from its being derived originally from the gift of God. For He having made all things is the first owner, and supreme Lord of whatever existeth; and having distributed among His creatures various gifts, blessings, and possessions, whoever seizeth or withholdeth any of these from one to whom they belong, without the authority of the first Giver, or the consent of the party itself, to which the Creatour has, in some cases, given full and absolute dominion over what it possesses, rises in opposition to the dispensations of God, and frustrates, as far as in him lies, His ordinances. While to confirm and secure this dispensation, the Lord having also added His express prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal!" the crime of the thief is two-fold; first, that of disturbing the order which God hath established in the world;

world ; and, secondly, that of directly opposing His positive commandment.

SERM.

II.



Consider the subject under this view of it, and ye will easily discover the futility of all the excuses made for this transgression ; as well as the prophaneness of those babblings of the weak and the wicked, who deny the unequal distribution of property in the world to be the dispensation of it's divine Governour, and thus prepare the means of justifying a new partition of it, whenever the needy have power to seize the possessions of the rich.

Still, however, the advocates for open robbery and positive theft are but few in comparison with those who are found ready to defend and to practise, what comes little behind them in criminality : the various frauds I mean practised by men in their dealings with each other. When a man, by a false account of an article of trade, obtains from another a greater sum for it than he is conscious it is worth, Is not this taking

SERM. taking from him by stealth that with which

II. he did not mean to part, and for which he is paid no equivalent? And is not the same in reality a theft? I know that the customs of trade, and other arguments, specious perhaps in the eyes of those who wish them to be true, are urged in justification of the advantages thus taken; But if by a false promise, or a feigned tale, a man be defrauded of money or goods, the offender is acknowledged by all to be a rogue, and to merit the penalty of the laws; and wherein do the cases differ? Does the tradesman spare assurances of the value of his goods, or is he without stories in their praise? Of just so much then as he thus gains beyond their just value he defrauds the buyer; and is guilty of robbery, aggravated by the ingratitude and treachery he returns for the confidence with which his representation is accepted.

In the numberless cases in which advantage is taken of the ignorance of the young or inexperienced to overreach them, and  
where

where the unfuspicious minds of the credulous are imposed on, (however some of these modes of obtaining money may be countenanced by the example of many of those who call themselves the fashionable world) the same charge of a breach of the eighth commandment will justly lie. For when a man has his property taken from him by means to which he not only has not, and would not have consented, but which he has not even suspected, Is it not stolen from him?

SERM.  
11.

What I have said of the criminality of obtaining an higher price for articles of trade than they are really worth, is so manifestly applicable to selling them deficient in due weight or measure, that it may appear unnecessary to notice this offence separately, as partaking in the guilt of theft. But such is the blindness of men to their own faults, that one who having been imposed on in the purchase of a piece of fine linen, complains of the iniquity of the merchant of whom he bought it, will re-  
turn

SERM. turn to his own house, and there, without  
 II. remorse, retail wine and strong liquors in  
 measures manufactured on purpose to defraud. Hence it becomes requisite to state, that the portion which is thus holden back from the purchaser, who pays for full measure, is in fact stolen from him, and however common may be offences of this kind, no one guilty of them has yet profited by the lesson of the apostle, and learned to labour, working the thing which is good.

Neither let it be imagined, that the small value of what is thus unfairly taken from each individual, exculpates the offender. For this plea, however commonly used in excuse of those petty thefts, success in which encourages the guilty to proceed to greater, until seized by the hand of justice, and the frequency of which perpetually disturbs the security, and interrupts the comfort of society, is in itself highly absurd: since a man has the same exclusive right to every part of his property, as he hath to the whole; and whether you take a  
 sum

sum from his treasury, a bottle from his SERM.  
cellar, or a stake from his hedge, you II.  
equally deprive him of somewhat that is  
his own, and thereby become a thief and a  
robber. And if you are in his service, if  
you fill any domestick office under him, this  
your situation, instead of lessening, encreases  
your crime; and by pilfering from your  
master, you add treason to your theft.  
True it is, that to deprive a man of much  
that belongs to him, is a more cruel deed,  
a more atrocious crime, but were it less  
than the value of a single mite, he is a  
robber who takes it, because it is not the  
value of the thing taken, but merely the  
depriving him of what is his own that con-  
stitutes the offence. Otherwise, miserable  
indeed would be the case of the poor, since  
their small pittance would lie open to every  
plunderer, and the little value of it tend  
only to justify the invasion.

Neither, manifestly therefore, can the  
imagined or real wealth of the person  
robbed excuse the theft. But how then  
shall

SERM. shall the circumstance of any thing taken  
 II. belonging to a nation in general, or any  
 less society, render blameless the person  
 who has surreptitiously obtained it? Yet  
 the multitudes of frauds that have been  
 perpetrated, the enormous plunder which  
 has been made with this only plea to distin-  
 guish them from theft, almost exceeds the  
 bounds of common calculation. The con-  
 nections and the rank, as well as the craft  
 of those who are guilty in this respect, oft-  
 times stand between them and justice, but  
 whatever be their station, their criminality  
 may be increased, but cannot be diminished  
 by it, their true characters are still those of  
 some of the vilest of mankind, and the  
 epithets that justly belong to them are still  
 the same: they are in truth not elevated,  
 but concealed by honours; not dignified,  
 but disguised by titles.

Difficult, indeed, would be the task of  
 enumerating all the practices by which, on  
 the one hand, the community is defrauded,  
 or on the other, individuals are imposed on,  
 while



while the offenders would conceal even from SERM.  
themselves, if they could, the iniquities II.  
they commit, by applying to them the  
gentle names of perquisites of office, cus-  
toms of trade, and the like. Suffice it to  
add to what has already been said on this  
point, let every man so prove his own work,  
that he may have praise not of men, but of  
the Lord. And let us now turn our thoughts  
from this disgusting view of human wick-  
edness to that method which the apostle  
recommends as a remedy against all real  
temptation to invade the property of others :  
“ Let him labour, working with his hands  
the thing which is good.”

The most powerful plea that a thief can  
urge for mercy is, that he was impelled by  
want to commit the depredation : this plea,  
therefore, St. Paul has completely obviated,  
by admonishing us of the duty of that,  
which, if honestly followed, will keep a  
man above want ; and a little observation  
will convince you, that the fate of those  
who become victims to publick justice for

SERM. this crime, may generally be traced to the  
II. neglect of sober labour. The sentence originally pronounced on man, that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread, still lies so on the race, that the greater part of the world feel their wants encrease as they cease from working. “I went by the field of the slothful, says the wise man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down; then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.” As it was in his days so it is in our own. The habitation of the slothful may still be distinguished by its state. Has he a garden, it is an uncultivated desert, the hedge torn up, the ground overrun with weeds; in his house, poverty stares through the broken lattice; his children, ignorant of all but  
I their

their father's example, wander idle in the streets, or roam about the fields, pilfering from their more opulent neighbours what may preserve them from that cold and hunger, against which his labour should have defended them: his person you may know by the listless gait, and tattered garment; his goods go piece-meal to be pledged; and should charity send him a dinner for his family, he has neither vessels or fuel to dress it. Now when to relieve himself from such pressing necessities, the wretch proceeds to lay his hands on his neighbour's property, Is it not his own idleness that has created the temptation? and would not labour have kept it both from his door and from his heart?

I say from his heart, because those who are properly employed, have not time to think of evil; and because through want of being so it is, that many of higher rank are reduced to that point of necessity which forces them on unwarrantable means of en-

SERM. creating their substance. For although a  
II. man be not compelled to seek his daily bread  
by manual labour, is there nothing in which  
he can employ himself either for his own  
improvement, or the benefit of society?  
Yet when useful pursuits are not embraced,  
to prevent the weight of time, and obviate  
that tediousness which attends total idleness,  
a succession of diversions, or a round of  
company, is sought after, and the great  
expences attending these, soon impoverish  
even the wealthy; and reduce them to  
straights, to deliver themselves from which,  
those in whom nothing should be seen but  
what is generous and great, who should be  
the nerves of the country, connecting the  
most distant parts with the head, desert their  
natural situations, their family seats, and  
conceal themselves in an hired apartment,  
from the notice to which their rank entitles  
them, or part with their independence for  
the sake of profit; if not submit to be  
guilty of practices which lower them to  
the level of a swindler.

In truth, whether he be found, among SERM.  
the high or the low, the rich or the poor, 11.  
an idle man is the pest of society : and great  
would be benefits resulting to mankind, if  
the rulers of this world would execute the  
apostolic recommendation, “ That if a man  
would not work, neither should he eat.”  
For the encouragement given to idleness is  
not the only evil arising from the neglect  
of this, but what others suffer from the  
want into which the indolent fall, should  
also be taken into consideration. How many  
families are reduced to misery and the ex-  
tremity of want through the idleness of the  
heads of them ! How many men come in  
their old age to be supported by the charity  
of their parishes, who, had they laboured  
in their youth as they were able, would not  
have needed the assistance of others in their  
declining years ! And is it honest, even in  
the common sense of the word, for a man  
to waste his time and strength when he is  
conscious the doing so will render him a  
burthen to others ? Yet is there not reason  
to fear, that many in this country either

SERM. refuse to labour, or idly spend what they  
 II. do earn, in their youth, with this very  
 view? that is, from the knowledge that  
 their parishes are obliged to support them,  
 when they are impotent, if they have no-  
 thing to maintain themselves? And is not  
 this shamefully abusing the charity of the  
 nation? Or can the bread thus unnecessa-  
 rily taken from others, some of whom have  
 scarcely sufficient to feed their own fami-  
 lies, be said to be well acquired? Let, then,  
 those who are yet in the prime, or the  
 vigour of life, timely consider, what dis-  
 grace they will lay up for themselves, nay,  
 to what censure they will justly be exposed,  
 if they, neglecting to employ the powers  
 they now have, are, through this, hereafter  
 reduced to throw themselves on their neigh-  
 bours for support.

I do not mean by what I have now said  
 to recommend any thing in the least incon-  
 sistent with our blessed Lord's command-  
 ment, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures  
 on earth," God forbid that any thing I  
 suggest

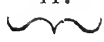
suggest should be interpreted as advice to SERM.  
omit the least opportunity of doing good II.  
for the sake of saving for the morrow  
which may never come, in contradiction to  
the doctrine of our divine Master. We  
know that the Lord will deliver him in the  
time of trouble who provideth for the sick  
and needy; and the holy psalmist testifies,  
that in all his experience, he never saw the  
righteous forsaken, or his seed begging  
their bread. And to this security of the  
divine protection the apostle seems to allude,  
when in the text he recommends working,  
not to lay up in store what may not be  
wanted for our own immediate support, but  
that we may have wherewithal to give to  
him that needeth. And although it may,  
at first sight, appear scarcely necessary to  
recommend to those who are so well dis-  
posed as to be inclined to impart of their  
earnings to others, that those earnings should  
be honestly acquired, yet recollection of the  
inconsistent characters sometimes met with,  
will convince us, that there are who want


SERM. to be reminded, that if they run in debt  
II. with one person, that they may give to another, they are, in fact, charitable with other people's money, and are giving to him that needeth that which is by no mean well obtained. Nay, there are even those who imagine that the end will justify the means; and that if it be to support the helpless, or relieve the poor, they are not to be condemned for the methods by which their money was gained. A doctrine subversive of every principle of righteousness, and which our apostle has, in another place, expressly condemned. To a world, then, in which such maxims are but too prevalent, the caution to labour only at that which is good was highly necessary: and the numbers of those who support themselves by ministering to the vices of others, should be reminded, that they are gaining only to their own destruction. For when such come to offer their sacrifice to their Lord, however costly it may be, What is it but the price of guilt?

When



When a man, touched with remorse for SERM.  
iniquitous practices of which he has been II.  
guilty, after relinquishing them entirely, sincerely wishes to repair, as much in him lies, the wrong he has done ; but through the changes wrought by death, or otherwise around him, can find no one to whom he should make restitution, and therefore distributes the produce of his unjust dealings in charity as a testimony of the reality of his wish to restore them ; one would hope the offering of an heart thus sincerely penitent would not be rejected as abominable ; but in any case less strong than this, the offerer of unfair gains may well stand in fear of receiving an answer like that of the Lord by His prophet Isaiah, “ I hate robbery for burnt-offering.” For however those who continue in sin may be ready to give, glad to distribute, it is still the sacrifice of the wicked which they offer, and that is an abomination to the Lord : And how much more if it be given with a wicked heart ! As it is, when men imagine they can thus cover their sins, bribing  
Heaven,

SERM. Heaven, as it were, for pardon. Or, when  
II.  their sins have left them, not they their  
sins, or, when they have continued in the  
gains of righteousness, until they think  
they have secured enough, to imagine that  
that God will accept what they chuse to set  
apart for an offering, is it not in the words  
of holy writ to think, that He is even such  
an one as themselves? The very worst  
generation of the Jews scrupled to put the  
price of blood into the treasury of the  
temple, but among us the price of a soul  
corrupted to its everlasting destruction, is  
by some thought an offering that can be  
accepted. How ignorant, how brutish must  
those be, who entertain such imaginations!  
He who would become the servant of the  
God of purity, must be pure his self,  
“ Because it is written, Be ye holy ; for I  
am holy.” And the only hope the thief,  
the extortioner, the unfair dealer in any  
way, and every one who has worked at that  
which is not good, has of attaining to re-  
pentance unto life is, to give again that  
which they have robbed, to wash their hands  
in

in innocency, and cleanse their hearts from SERM.  
iniquity, and so go to the altar, receive the II.  
cup of salvation, and call upon the name   
of the Lord.



## SERMON III.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

---

ST. MATT. XII. 36.

*But I say unto you, that every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment: for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*


THESE words stand at the close of SERM.  
some observations made by our Lord III.  
on offences of the tongue; and the last  
clause of them, “ for by thy words thou  
shalt be justified, and by thy words thou  
shalt be condemned,” seem to refer to His  
preceding declaration, that, “ Out of the  
abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Since

SERM Since the criminality of the words manifestly proceeds from the corruption of the heart by which they are suggested ; and as long as the language of the mouth continues to be bad, so long it is plain, some foulness remaineth in the heart. And this observation may well serve as an answer to those who would ask, why it is declared, that our words shall clear or condemn us, whereas, in other parts of Scripture we are told, that men shall be judged according to their works ; and there is oftentimes a considerable difference between words and actual deeds ? For the words, whatever they be, prove the real state of the mind ; since, if they be sincere, they certainly do so ; and if they be not sincere, they at once prove its falsehood. It is not, therefore, only by the mischief which they do to our neighbours, that our tongues may bring us into judgement, but by the proofs they yield of the wickedness of our hearts ; and, under this division, I shall now consider the guilt which we may contract by our words.

The

The blasphemy of some of the Jews, who SERM.  
ascribed the miracles of our Lord to the III.  
power of Beelzebub, gave occasion to the  
declaration of the text; and although no  
profane speeches whatever do, as profane,  
merit the lenient title of idle words, we  
sometimes meet with men who utter such  
without seeming sensible of the full import  
and real criminality of their speeches; and  
under this view of them such may well be  
called idle words, as being spoken without  
the speakers giving themselves the trouble  
of reflecting on their real signification and  
tendency, ere they delivered them. But  
still this very negligence betrays an heart  
by no mean duly impressed with reverence  
for that divine Being whose name or dis-  
pensations are thus profaned, and, conse-  
quently, are not fitly disposed for the king-  
dom of Heaven. Now among such speeches  
are to be numbered, all reflections on the  
providence of God, and the truth of His  
revelation; the last of which are near akin  
to the offence censured by our Lord at the  
time He spake the words before us, since  
he

SERM. he who doubts the truth of the Gospel,  
 III.  questions the reality of the miracles wrought  
 in its support: all slighting speeches in re-  
 spect to the importance of religion, all  
 irreverence, quotations and applications of  
 inspired writings, and the placing of any  
 thing relating to the worship of God in a  
 ridiculous light. And while such words  
 betray an heart still defiled with thoughts  
 and principles evil and false, they also affect  
 the hearers of them, who perceiving the  
 utterers of these bold speeches not to be  
 immediately punished for them, thence take  
 courage to follow the sad example: and  
 thus the divine forbearance to the guilty,  
 without which they must perish, does itself  
 add to the number of their crimes; so com-  
 plex are the chains of sin, so intricate the  
 toils of Satan! But this evil consequence  
 may follow every kind of idle words; to  
 the particular species I am now noticing  
 there is another attached. Of the restraint  
 which religion puts upon their passions men  
 generally wish to get rid, and, consequently,  
 they eagerly catch at every idea that tends

to




to lighten the weight of its authority, or SERM.  
to lessen the importance of its functions; III.  
hence it comes to pass, that on a mind  
hesitating between virtue and vice, a random  
reflection, an inconsiderate word, will make  
an impression which the speaker neither  
expected nor intended; and one idle expres-  
sion determine a soul to pursuits leading to  
everlasting destruction. Let any one who  
doubts the danger of such an effect, recol-  
lect how often his own resolutions have  
been determined by the meereft trifles; how  
often, when inclination led the same way,  
the least appearance of a reason, the least  
shadow of an example, has fixed his choice;  
and he will then see the necessity of bridling  
his tongue, if he would wish to keep clear  
of the guilt of those who cause others to  
offend. If he would wish to avoid being  
covered with the justest confusion, the best  
grounded terrour on the arrival of that day,  
when men shall give account of every idle  
word which they have spoken.


SERM.

III.

~~~~~  
The words of Solomon, “ He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth slander, is a fool,” by expressing an evil purpose of heart in those who are guilty of these crimes, removes them at once from the class of those mentioned in the text to one of deeper criminality : and thus slander, in whatever shape it appears, under whatever form it endeavours to disguise itself, betrays the existence of malevolence in the heart. Indeed, as it in general springs from envy, the wish to conceal a motive which would so surely discredit every report of the tongue actuated by it, impels the slanderer to assume some false appearance, under which he may deliver, with less danger of detection, the dictates of that passion which rancours in his heart. Sometimes it is surprize at things so unexpected happening that forces the slanderer to break the bonds of silence, and give a detail of what has never happened at all. Sometimes his indignation at vice will not suffer him to be mute, but leads him carefully to delineate enormities that have not been committed:

mitted : and at others, even sympathy itself SERM.
is pleaded for dwelling upon the feigned III.
errours, losses, or crimes of his neighbours. 
Nay, do we not sometimes see from that
which, with justice and a penetration pecu-
liar to itself, the law of Moses forbid,
countenancing a poor man in his cause,
occasion is taken, under the fair semblance
of disgust at tyranny and oppression, to
vent against a superiour malice that has
been long brooded in the heart ; and his
motives are misrepresented, his actions mis-
construed, and his character vilified, not for
the ostensible reasons then given, but for a
grudge of ancient date. And before the
Judge, who searcheth the reins and the
heart, will such words, think ye, tend to
justify or condemn the utterers ?

The same question may well be repeated
in the case of those who, with malicious
pleasure, propagate the evil reports they
hear of their acquaintance. It may, per-
haps, be true, that they repeat no more
than they have heard ; what they have so

SERM. heard may likewise be true : But what must
III. be the heart of him who can speak with
 pleasure of his brother's shame ? Can it be
the residence of love and good-will ? Or if
his words indicate the abode of something
very different from these therein, when the
judgement shall sit, must he be justified or
condemned by them ? These are points
well worthy the serious consideration of
those who, while they partake not in the
ingenuity, yet share in the guilt of the in-
ventors of scandalous tales, making them
their own by the confidence with which
they repeat them. Small would be the
circle in which the raiser of a mischievous
report could his self spread it, it is by the
retailers of it that it is carried to the extent
to which it reaches ; gradually enlarging
itself like military commands, first to tens,
from tens to hundreds, from hundreds to
thousands, and from thousands to tens of
thousands ; until the original authour of the
scandal is lost in the multitude of his part-
ners in guilt ; and the reputation of his
victim is generally defamed. Various, in-
deed,

deed, will be the motives of different individuals in this multitude for the propagation of the tale : while some are evidently impelled by envy, and others manifestly guided by malevolence, some are actuated by the same motives in a less degree, even down to that proportion in which they are almost concealed from themselves ; and, in others, the report truly becomes idle words, being uttered merely to fill up the pauses of conversation, without considering the truth or the falsity, the good or evil tendency of what they say. Yet all this while the character of the subject of the scandal is suffering ; and after, perhaps, he has seen and acknowledged, and repented of the fault that is so much blazed abroad, censure continues to be heaped on him without remorse ; and neither the feelings of his friends and connections, nor the injustice of loading with invective one, who no longer deserves reproach, can stop the wordy torrents of those babblers, who are skilled in little other labour than that of the lips.

SERM.

III.

SERM.

III.



I doubt not but to some persons these, which are daily offences of common conversation, may seem too trifling to deserve notice; but nothing is so among those whose duty it is to strive to go on to perfection; and although trifling indeed are the characters of those idle persons, who wander about from house to house, as tattlers and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not, yet it may, I conceive, reasonably be doubted, whether they do not hereby nearly as much mischief to society as they are capable of doing; and Can they, think ye, be justified by having done no more than this?

We often hear people reproaching themselves for not having thought before they spake, and lamenting the consequences of their words, when it is too late to prevent them; and the very frequent instances of this would, one might hope, serve as a caution to others against repeating the same folly. But, alas! almost daily are the proofs we receive of the justice of the apostle's
obser-

observation, that the tongue setteth on fire SERM.
the course of nature. For, who can reckon III.
up the secret animosities, the open quarrels,
which are occasioned by the mismanagement of it ! In fact, to one who attentively
considers it, the effect of words upon the
human mind seems beyond all estimate :
not only the deep offence that a word unad-
visedly spoken will give, calls for our at-
tention, but the whimsical temper that men
betray in their resentments on this point
should impress on us the necessity of cir-
cumspection. For, strange as it may ap-
pear, experience, I believe, will prove, that
it is not at reflections on their moral cha-
racter that men shew the greatest indigna-
tion ; a reproach on their judgements, their
tastes, and even those for which they are
least of all answerable, their persons, is
much more eagerly resented : while even
those who are not quick in quarrel, feel no
less sensibly on such occasions ; and the
hearts of the gentle and inoffensive are
wrung by words, which, if spoken with
intention to produce all their effects, would

SERM. manifest sad bitterness of spirit; but even
 III. when uttered without that, betray a very
 reprehensible disregard to the peace and
 comfort of others.


There is a generation who seem to delight in giving vexation where they think they may safely do it; you see them perpetually persecuting, with poignant ridicule and cruel jests, individuals, from whose temper or abilities they imagine themselves secure against the retort they merit. You hear them propagating tales to make such appear ridiculous; and leading them into embarrassment by feigned information. What disposition of soul, then, do the words of these men indicate? Surely not a charitable one in themselves: neither do they tend to promote the growth of it among others. Their most common excuse is, that they were but in sport. But to sport with the sufferings of others is, under the most favourable interpretation, the characteristic of him to whom Solomon applies it, “As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows,
 and

and death, so is he that deceiveth his neighbour, and faith, Am I not in sport?" And the errours into which they lead those whom they make their dupes, may, with great ease, thus give rise to disgust, animosity, and contention. And can we suppose the authours of such evils will be justified by their words?

SERM.
III.


If not, however, what shall we think of the tale bearer, for those are the natural fruits of his labours; so much so, indeed, that the wise king seemeth to ascribe the continuance of strife exclusively to him; "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale bearer, the strife ceaseth." (Prov. xxvi. 20.) And in another place; "He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends." Nay, the divine lawgiver his self saw sufficient in this practice to require an express prohibition; and we read, in the 16th verse of the 19th chapter of Leviticus, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale bearer among thy people,"

SERM. people," coupled with, " Neither shalt
 III. thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour," and supported by that solemn and sublime clause of authority, " I am the Lord." If we may judge from the multitudes of mistakes of the kind, it is a very difficult thing accurately to represent to another the words or the deeds of a third person: and individuals differ so much not only in their modes of expression, but in their conception, that it seems almost impossible, that a thing given at second hand should not vary in some measure from the original; yet that troublesome generation who tell of such things as pertain not to them, are generally confident that they repeat them as they heard them; and thus are kindled flames of contention that at length alarm the authours of them, and lead them to ask, with all the vacant wonder of the fool, Who would have supposed what they did so innocently would have produced such consequences? For I am far from meaning to insinuate, that all tale-bearers are guilty of intentional mischief:
 be

be it acknowledged, that their words are SERM.
only idle words, yet since these are for- III.
bidden, they are, while uttering them, 
doing that which is unlawful: and if, by
committing this, they occasion evils which
they never intended, it highly becomes them
to consider, whether for such evils they
may not justly be called into judgement.

The same flimsy excuse of meaning no harm, is pleaded by some, who take still greater liberties in speech; and we hear men convicted of falsehood urge, that they did not intend to hurt any one by what they said: but even if they affirm, as others will boldly plead, that their object was to do good thereby, so far from making a sound defence, they are only confessing themselves guilty of what the apostle so strongly reprobates by asserting, that just is the damnation of those who say, Let us do evil that good may come. How much less then, when they break the divine commandment, Lye not one to another,—for the sake of appearing to be endued with wit,
or

SERM. or possessed of some excellence which they
 III. have not ! These are far from idle words
 being uttered on purpose to deceive ; and
 with the multitude of others that are so, to
 conceal faults, avoid anger, or gain favour,
 when brought to accompt in the day of
 judgement, must tend to condemn those
 who are guilty of them of lying lips, and
 a deceitful tongue. Indeed, these last often
 contain false accusations of others, either
 directly made, or conveyed in hints not to
 be misunderstood ; or by assuming the merit
 which in truth belongs to others, rob them
 of their due recompence, and are really
 breaches of the ninth commandment.

Neither among mere idle words are to
 be ranked that foolish talking and jesting,
 which the apostle says, become not Chris-
 tians ; conversation, I mean, replete with
 those coarse jests and obscene images in
 which the profligate and lascivious delight
 to deal. When men use gross expressions
 without appearing to be sensible of the in-
 decency of them, What is this but a mark
 that


that they have destroyed all sense of purity SERM.
from their minds? and if they are sensible III.
of what they utter, How foul must be those
hearts, from the abundance of which proceedeth an almost continued stream of filthiness? The mischief perpetrated by men of this character is not limited to the confusion with which loose discourse covers the innocent and modest: from causing this, perhaps, they are, in many cases, careful to refrain; but both their words and example tend to the corruption of the young, to encourage them in vices to which they are already too much inclined, and to enflame their appetites which are already difficult to be controuled: And how shall those words be justified which cause one of the little ones that believe in Christ to offend?

The worst of those which can justly be termed idle words, are such as while we doubt whether we should utter them or not, because the nature of them seems undecided, we yet deliver in the mere wantonness of speech. When, therefore, we are so little
scrupulous

SERM. scrupulous of running the hazard of a
 III. crime, if we actually commit one, Can we

wonder that we shall be called into judgment for it? “In a multitude of words,” saith Solomon, “there wanteth not sin.” And if we consider the vanity of the opinions, the badness of the maxims, and the falsity of the assertions, which great talkers deliver, we shall see sufficient reason to assent to the justice of the observation; and particularly so in regard to that profusion of asseveration which they use, protesting by every thing that should be sacred, the truth of the most unimportant matters. In fine, crimes of the same kind, although not of the same degree, and mischief of the same sort, although not of the same extent, are committed by the idle babbler, as by the intentional offender; and since we are warned against the evils of this practice, we are, in the purest justice, answerable for whatever we may occasion by neglecting the admonition. Let it therefore sink deep into your minds, that “death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love
 love

love it shall eat the fruit thereof." That SERM.
" he that can rule his tongue shall live ^{III.}
without strife; and he that hateth babbling
shall have less evil. Rehearse not unto
another that which is told unto thee, and
thou shalt fare never the worse. Whether
it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other
men's lives; and if thou canst without
offence, reveal them not. If thou hast
heard a word, let it die with thee; and be
bold, it will not burst thee." Remember,
that trifling in sense as may be the multi-
tude of words that are spoken, they are far
from trifling in their consequences; since
by them it will be determined, whether we
are worthy to be admitted to an inheritance
in that everlasting kingdom of purity, peace,
and righteousness, which is ready to be re-
vealed: and as ye would not risque your
final lot on the babblings of an heedless
tongue, let the solemn words of Him from
whose mouth your last sentence must pro-
ceed, serve you as a perpetual admonition
to circumspection and restraint. " But I

SERM. say unto you, that every idle word that
 III. men speak, they shall give account thereof
in the day of judgement: for by thy words
thou shalt be justified, and by thy words
thou shalt be condemned.”

SERMON IV.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

EXOD. XX. 17.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house ;
thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,
nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant,
nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that
is thy neighbour's.*

IN the sad list of those vices which St. SERM.
Paul hath forewarned Christians should, IV.
with unbridled licence, overrun the world
in the perilous times of the last days,
selfishness and covetousness hold the first
places ; “ This know also,” says that most
vigilant minister of Christ, “ that in the
last days perilous times shall come. For
men shall be lovers of their own selves,

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F

covetous,

SERM. covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,"

IV. and so on. It is true, an ingenious disputant might here demand, "In what age have not men been selfish and covetous?" But the words of the apostle plainly point to a peculiar prevalence of these vices, and that in a degree which should affect the general safety of believers; "Perilous times shall come."—Days of difficulty and hazard.

The true and important question therefore is, Have we ourselves lived to see times of this description? And as this is the proper question to be asked, so is it one that is easily resolved. For can we not of our own knowledge testify, that licentiousness is risen to such a height, and apostacy from the faith become so common, as to multiply the temptations, and encrease the difficulties of those who would yet continue in the doctrine of the Gospel? Have we not seen a very numerous nation publicly renounce christianity, and put many who would not join in the general impiety, to death,

death, for their adherence to religion? And SERM.
have not the two vices which stand at the IV.
head of the catalogue left us by St. Paul, 
had a very great influence in producing this
state of things? Consider what first opened
a door to the confusion, the excesses, and the
miseries, that have overrun that wretched
land? What first took off all the salutary
restraints that regular government, a sense
of religion, and respect for authority im-
posed on the passions of its inhabitants?
Was it not the desire of some individuals
to supplant others in the dignities and the
emoluments they possessed? And what was
this but covetousness? What gave rise to
the doctrine of equality, but the desire of
those who had little, to partake of what
belonged to those who had much? Or
what has caused the same doctrine to find
so many favourers in our own country, but
an evil eye at the superiour power, or more
ample possessions, of those who are greater
or richer than themselves? The leaders of
the guilty, it is true, hold out other pre-
tences for their conduct: but this they do,

SERM. because the publication of a motive so foul,
IV. would doubtless prevent their success ;
not because they have any repugnance to own their disregard of the precepts of religion, since these they are insane enough most openly to deride. To this more exceeding sinful point of sin, many of their followers, we may hope, would not willingly accompany them ; but being deceived by reasonings cunningly devised to mislead, they have, ere they were aware, been seduced to act directly contrary to His laws, whom they still own for their God and their Saviour ; although they would be unfeignedly shocked at thinking they had presumptuously trampled on His commandments. For such then, and for others, who, without timely admonition, might suffer themselves to be brought into the same situation, lest any such teachers should come among you, I shall now investigate the divine precept contained in the text, and shew how totally inconsistent with it are those levelling doctrines which such various means are used


used to instil into the hearts of the people SERM.
of this land. IV.

This commandment, ye know, stands the last of the ten; and it seems to have been there placed, because obedience to it is a sure mean of securing a compleat compliance with those that precede it: since he who does not covet his neighbour's wife, or his neighbour's goods, will scarcely proceed to adultery or theft. It appears here, likewise, as the seal of Heaven to the sacredness of property; and gives the sanction of God Almighty to that exclusive right which every man has over all that is his own; whether it be much, or whether it be little. On which account it seems to be but a natural step in the progress of vice, for those who have once embraced principles destructive of this right, to proceed to deny the authority of God Himself, against whom they have already rebelled in fact. And in what must this course begun in covetousness end but in misery? Or if all men were to give way to this vice, (and if

SERM. one may practice it without guilt, surely
 IV. all may) Would not the earth exhibit only
 a scene of rapine, murder, and inexpressible
 distress?

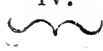
It is under the pretence of friendship to the lower ranks of men, that the propagators of the doctrine of equality endeavour to forward their system. But mark the fruits of this friendship in the natural order in which they arise; or, in other words, observe the curse which, by His original constitution of things, God hath affixed to the breach of this His statute, “Thou shalt not covet.” When a man begins to imagine that he should be happier if he had some possession of his neighbour’s, he no longer enjoys the peace of mind that flows from content. Incapable of deriving satisfaction from what he has, because his wishes are anxiously fixed upon something yet unobtained, he consumes, in all the solicitude of desire, that time which, but for improper inclinations being raised in his mind, might have been passed in comfort:

so

so fallely do those who excite such wishes SERM.
 in our breasts stile themselves our *friends*! IV.
 But if, to free himself from the disquietude 
 of desire, he proceed to obtain by fraud or
 force the possession which he covets, of a
 neighbour he makes an enemy, and becomes
 exposed to all the penalties which may
 justly be exacted from the thief or the
 robber.

Similar to what it thus produces in the
 case of an individual, are the effects of
 covetousness when it is excited in a multi-
 tude: experiencing separately the same un-
 easiness, they become collectively restless;
 and by communicating their complaints,
 they mutually inflame each other's minds,
 till bursting the chains of fear, as they
 have before broken the bands of conscience,
 they assert, by brute force, the claims which
 justice would not support: the rightful
 possessors of the goods desired, are thus re-
 duced to violent means of self-defence; and
 all the horrors of civil war, of natural
 consequence, ensue.

SERM. This, it *must* be acknowledged, would

IV.  be the case, where the party that wishes to gain, and that which is unwilling to lose, are nearly equal in number or in power; but if the friends of the levelling system are willing to suppose a course of events more favourable to their schemes, and that the multitude of their associates would at once repress all opposition, and thus put them in possession of that share of good things which they wish to have, let us examine what would then be the consequence.


Would not the acquisition of what was at first demanded only lead to further requisition? Would not the gratification of some desires cause others likewise to arise? This a little observation will demonstrate to you is the common progress of human appetite. If it were not, we should be able to point out some degree of wealth and power at which, when men arrive, they are in general content to stop. But whoever heard of that point? Look at those
around

around you, whose situation in life has been SERM.
improved; are they not reaching at some- IV.
thing further? Or enquire of your own
heart; Are ye at all more satisfied with
your state now, than ye were years ago;
when ye imagined, that ye could by this
time have obtained something, that would
have secured your contentment? Consider
any above you whose places ye would be
most desirous of occupying: ye will find
that they too have their troubles; and, if
those who from their infancy were prepared
for such situations, meet with cares in them,
Would not ye who are unused to them find
still more?

Behold, then, the folly of that covetous-
ness with which designing men strive to
enflame the minds of the poorer part of the
community. Being, from its origin, a
transgression of the laws of God, like every
breach of those perfect ordinances, it neces-
sarily tends to the misery of the transgres-
sors; and even if, without noticing the
enormous crimes which must be committed,
and

SERM. and the almost insuperable difficulties that
IV. must be overcome, ere such a thing could
be accomplished, we for a moment suppose
that perfect state of equality introduced into
society, which none but the most ignorant
of men, or those of disordered intellects,
can imagine feasible; the taking away all
inequality of possession would not extinguish
covetousness; because a man's neighbour
not having more than he, will not prevent
him from the wishing to have more than
his neighbour: and though there would be
none in the race of life to overtake, there
would still be all to leave behind; which
would be an equally strong spur to the
passions, of either avaricious or ambitious
men.


It being, therefore, contrary to the nature
of the human passions to be cured by in-
dulgence, and especially so to that of one
which being not bodily but mental, is not
weakened or extinguished by the debility or
age of the body; and this, by the just
appointment of Heaven, leading, while it
does

does continue to prevail in our breasts, only SERM.
to misery : What have we to do but to re- IV.
press, and, if possible, to root all covetous 
desires out of our hearts ? To induce you
to set about a work so salutary, so produc-
tive of peace, so necessary to your happiness,
to the statement I have already made of the
folly of indulging this passion, let me now
add that of its guilt, as comprehending in-
justice to man, and impiety towards God.

Strange as it may appear, that in this
land where so much pains are taken to in-
struct the poorest of the people in the great
principles of morality, there should be any
who can enter upon a course of conduct
replete with iniquity, and yet not be sensible
of the injustice of it ; yet, I believe, it is
true, that many have listened with pleasure
to proposals for levelling the distinctions,
and making a new distribution of the pos-
sessions of the country, without being at all
stricken with the nefarious wickedness of
the scheme proposed. Engrossed with the
thought of gaining by the change, and of
partaking

SERM. partaking in what their superiours now
 IV. enjoy, they never considered whether, if
 they were in the situation of those who
 were to be plundered, they should be willing
 to have their property in like manner taken
 from them ?

Yet the very lowest rule of justice is, not to do that unto another, which we would not he should do unto us. Had this been observed, What numerous malignant aspersions cast upon the higher orders of society, how many misrepresentations made to render them hateful in the eyes of the inferiour classes, would have been buried in silence ; because the utterers would not like such calumnies to be spoken of themselves ! Had this been observed, how early would have been rejected every idea of conspiracy, to strip of their legal rights, and attack in their lawful possessions, those who were raised by their rank or property above the commonalty of the land ! For are the boldest leaders, the most obstinate supporters of such conspiracy, inclined to have any
 rights

rights themselves claim, trampled on, or SERM.
any property they may possess, taken from IV.
them? If not, the application of this 
maxim of justice shews at once the hideous
deformity of their conduct. While com-
paring that conduct with the prohibition of
the text, will no less quickly shew how
exposed it is to the divine vengeance. For
thus saith the Lord, “Thou shalt not
covet (not only thy neighbour’s house,
wife, servants, or cattle, but) any thing that
is thy neighbour’s.”

Now, is it possible, any man could enter-
tain a thought of joining with others to
take a portion of his neighbour’s property,
and divide it among themselves, without
transgressing this commandment? For ob-
serve, it is the very wish that is for-
bidden; nor is the prohibition restrained to
the particulars enumerated, but is extended
universally to every thing that is thy neigh-
bour’s: and we cannot envy a man for his
wealth, his privileges, or his place, with-
out breaking this precept of the Governour
of

SERM. of the universe. That much uneasiness,
 IV. and many sufferings, naturally attend the
 transgression of it, I have before shewn in
 stating, that a man no sooner begins to de-
 sire any part of his neighbour's property,
 than he forfeits the tranquillity of his own
 mind; that it opens the way to contention,
 and, in its progress, necessarily produces
 hostilities. I must now call your minds to
 the manifest judgements which God hath
 been pleased to inflict on some who have
 more especially disregarded this command-
 ment.

The first step towards coveting what is
 our neighbour's, is becoming discontented
 with what ourselves possess; a state of
 temper which generally breaks forth into
 murmuring against the dispensations of Pro-
 vidence; and which we are, by an apostle,
 cautioned to avoid, by the example of the Is-
 raelites, who, in the desert, perished through
 the same ungrateful behaviour: "Neither
 murmur ye as some of them also mur-
 mured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

From

From being discontented with our own goods to envying those of others, is an easy transition; and then is our breach of the commandment perfect. The tremendous manifestation of the divine wrath on both these crimes, is thus described by the psalmist: “ They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the congregation of Abiram; and a fire was kindled in their company; and the flame burnt up the wicked.” And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of those who, in the pursuits of ambition and avarice, both forbidden by the tenth commandment, have been made to eat the fruit of their own doings, and, like the discontented Israelites, perished while the meat was yet in their mouths.

There

SERM.

IV.

our own doors, so pregnant with instruction peculiarly adapted to ourselves, that it would scarcely be less than leaving unnoticed a marked lesson of the Almighty, to close this discourse without mentioning it. That nation which, awhile ago, was holden up to the inhabitants of this land as setting a bright example of wisdom, and as having discovered a method of raising themselves to an unprecedented height of glory and happiness, and as preparing the way for the reign of peace and felicity over all the earth: that nation, I say, having first seized the wealth of all the opulent among themselves, then broken into the adjoining countries, and plundered the inhabitants of them, are now starving in the midst of their neighbour's possessions. They, indeed, not only broke the divine commandments, but, with the most daring impiety, blasphemed and denied God and His Christ, wherefore the Lord seems to have taken their punishment more immediately into His own hands, the nations
which

which their nefarious conduct raised against them, have met with little success in the war, yet are the people who call themselves victorious, reduced to the lowest state of misery. The sword having passed through their land in its most dreadful shapes, the pike of the conspirator, the dagger of the assassin, and the axe of the executioner, different adventurers have, by turns, gained the command both of the power and purse of the country, until the people, equally fleeced by all, have lost all sensibility through their sufferings, and lie in the lowest state of human degradation; deprived of all the comforts of this life, and incapable of drawing consolation from the hope of another. Let us, then, as witnesses of these just afflictions, give glory to God, and confess the equity of the sentence uttered by His prophet; “Woe be to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy

SERM.
IV.


SERM. thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of
 IV. the wall, and the beam out of the timber
 shall answer it. Woe be to him that build-
 eth a town with blood, and establisheth a
 city by iniquity. Behold, Is it not of the
 Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour
 in the very fire, and the people shall weary
 themselves for very vanity?" And let us,
 if we would not bring down the same cala-
 mities on our country, and ourselves, learn
 from this most impressive example, that
 covetousness leads not to riches; that though
 men should prove too weak to resist the
 plundered, the Lord He is strong: and if,
 by attacking the former, ye break the laws
 of the latter; though following the com-
 mon course of wickedness, ye, after putting
 away a good conscience, make shipwreck
 of faith, and deny God, He cannot deny
 Himself, but is to day the same, who in
 times past declared, "Vengeance is mine,
 I will repay, saith the Lord!" Humble
 yourselves, therefore, under the mighty
 hand of God; when suffering, commit your
 cause unto Him that judgeth righteously;
 then,

then, when He shall be revealed, taking SERM.
vengeance on those who knew not Him, IV.
and obey not the Gospel of his Son, instead
of hiding your faces with terrour from Him
Who sitteth on the throne, ye shall rejoice
at His appearance, and glory in the God of
your salvation !

SERMON V.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

ROM. XIII. 8.

Once no man any thing, but to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

THE delivery of this general rule is SERM.
preceded by the mention of several v.
particulars, in which the apostle directeth
its application : and the turn of expression
used in it appears to have been occasioned
by the terms he had employed in recommending those particulars : “ Render to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing but to love one another.”

SERM.

v.

gained by the change of phrase, could not escape so able a master of reasoning as St. Paul; and he has used it in its full extent; suddenly striking to our hearts the lesson that our love of one another is a debt which we should deem never to be compleatly discharged; while, by continuing in the payment of it, we shall fulfil the law which contains our duty towards our neighbour. For to the commandments of the second table only does he seem here to have respect; since he immediately subjoins, “For this thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness; and if there be any other commandment, (as there is, honour thy father and thy mother) it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Which limitation of the apostle’s meaning I would particularly recommend to your attention, as tending to expose, in this case, the reasoning of a generation now but too numerous, who have embraced a very summary

many method of easing themselves from the SERM.
burthen of the particular precepts of reli- v.
gion, by persuading themselves, that their
whole duty is contained in an ineffective
benevolence, sheltered behind their preten-
sions to which they lie insensible to the calls
of truth, justice, and piety. There may
be others also to whom, although they be
not so far advanced in error, the setting of
the injunction of the text in its proper
light may afford an useful admonition.

It is, then, an active principle, by the
entertainment of which we are here taught
that the law is fulfilled, and whatever is
less than that, is not the thing meant to be
inculcated: owe no man any thing but love,
is, render to all their dues with that readi-
ness, sincerity, and integrity, which the
feelings of affection, as well as the sense of
justice, dictate: and it is clearly at the so
compleat discharge of all the social duties,
of every charitable office, that nothing shall
remain unpaid, that this precept is directed,
in opposition to the backwardness and par-
tiality

SERM. tiality which men are apt to betray in the
 V. performance of them, and the evil ingenuity they shew in framing systems to elude the force of the commandments : the envious man cannot conceive, how his propagating an evil report, which his malice makes him believe to be true, can be a breach of the ninth commandment ; neither can a covetous man imagine, what the advantages he takes, can have to do with the crime forbidden by the eighth ; while many, who perhaps think themselves entitled to the character of benevolent, have nothing to urge in support of their claim, but that they do no harm to any body. How different is this from the principle the text would inculcate, that our debt of kindness is never discharged, but that as long as there are any good offices we can do, so long do we continue to owe them ! It is true, the apostle says, that love is the fulfilling of the law, because it worketh no ill ; but, surely, he never meant to restrain its operation to this, when he has his self given so many precepts that extend beyond it ;

it; and when his divine Master had formally delivered rules of action in addition to those of the law, and expressly called this very commandment in the extent in which He gave it, a new one. “A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one other; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

Far from this, too, there were in the law of Moses several positive precepts, exemplifying the manner in which the general commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” was to be applied to practice; and would Christians occasionally peruse these, they might gather from them useful hints towards complying with the exhortation of St. John, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.”

That carelessness in respect to the property of others, which is often manifested among us, and is so incompatible with real regard for the owners of it, will appear highly

SERM. highly opprobrious to those who live under
 v. an higher dispensation, if compared with
 the following precept of Moses: “ Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ox, or his sheep astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, then thou shalt bring it into thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shall thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother’s which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.” Deut. xxii. 1—3.

Compare with this direction the readiness with which some, who yet would not be called uncharitable, apply to their own use what they find belonging to others. Compare with it the insensibility with which others will waste, or destroy what is their neighbour’s; from the lawless hunter, who

demolishes the fences, and tramples down SERM.
the crops of the husbandman, to the waste- V.
ful domestick, who pleads his master's sup-
posed wealth for needlessly consuming his
substance: and ye will then see, that while
the law commanded no more than the real
practice of the love it had enjoined, the
pretended disciples of the Gospel, prove the
conformity of their lives with it, by doing
deeds of hatred to their neighbours.


Again, it was said to them of old time,
“ If there be among you a poor man, of
one of thy brethren within any of thy gates
in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth
thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor
shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but
thou shalt open thine hand unto him, and
shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need,
in that which he wanteth. Beware that
there be not a thought in thy wicked heart,
saying, The seventh year, the year of re-
lease, is at hand; and thine eye be evil
against thy poor brother, and thou givest
him nought; and he cry unto the Lord
against


SERM. against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou
 v. shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall
 not be grieved when thou givest him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of thy land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”
 Deut. xv. 7—11.

To say that the generous bounty here commanded is seldom practised in our land, would be doing gross injustice to many among us: But is there not yet a remnant whose behaviour calls for the admonition; who imagine that they have satisfied every obligation incumbent on them if they have not taken or withholden the property of others, and have no conception of the debt mentioned in the text, “to love one another?” The pleas which such use for saving their money, that it was through their own imprudence that those who need
 their

their assistance, became poor, that every SERM. man has difficulties enough of his own to V. struggle with, and the like, are by no mean allowed in the law. How much farther, then, must they be from availing aught under the Gospel, of which the distinguishing commandment is, that we love one another as Christ loved us? For He loved us so, as to suffer for us; to love, as He loved, therefore, we must be ready to put ourselves to inconvenience, nay, and to something more, if that be necessary, for the relief of a brother; and by this shall all men know, that we are His disciples.


The last Mosaical precept I shall notice runs thus: "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Lev. xix. 17. Affection really warm, overlooks no interest of the object of its love; and daily are the instances of anxiety manifested to secure to persons beloved, the favourable regards of those whose patronage may be of use to them in the world; the friendship of these they are advised

SERM. v.  vifed to cultivate, by all means, againſt giving any offence to theſe, are they moſt earneſtly cautioned : or if, through want of ſuch caution, they do forfeit the favour of any who might have aſſiſted them, the perſons by whom the caution ought to have been given, are cenſured, as deficient in that attention which affectionate attachment dictates. Now if the rebuke thus paſſed be juſt, ſurely, in the more important caſe of offences againſt God, it becomes an office of charity to reprove, rebuke, exhort ; and, in proportion to our belief in the reality of His ſuperintendance, the univerſality of His providence, the ſeverity of his judgments, and the certainty of His rewards to them who walk in His laws, will naturally be our earneſtneſs to preſerve all whom we love from incurring His indignation, or forfeiting His protection. In Chriſtians, therefore, who are taught that the ſanctions of the divine commandments are according to the perfection of Him who ordained them, this care will, if our love be real, take place of all others ; and were we to act adequately
to

to our profession, our conduct would thus SERM.
be the practice of the noblest of all princi- V.
ples under the highest improvement. 

Neglect of duty, and transgressions of the law, do, in general, manifestly arise from selfishness; the completion of our duty, and the fulfilling of the law, should, therefore, it should seem, spring from the contrary principle; and a ready and sincere discharge of all the social offices, can be secured only by brotherly love being fixed in our breasts. In deeds of kindness, in acts suggested by benevolence, the heart goes before the hand, and the works of this last seldom equal the wishes of the former. Neither are the merits of the objects of our love scrupulously weighed. If they appear to need our assistance, if an opportunity of obliging them offer, much is easily forgotten, much is immediately forgiven; and by the natural operation of this principle, we become merciful, even as our Father which is in Heaven is merciful, shewing kindness, and conferring favours even on the thankless and ungrateful.

Did


SERM. Did such a principle then reign in the
v.  breasts of all the human race, what a perfect cessation of all injuries, what an uninterrupted exchange of good offices would it produce ! What sobriety of conduct, what abstinence would it cause in life ! not only on account of the other effects which the indulgence of ourselves may have on the welfare or comfort of others, but from the effectual recollection which would then take place, that by refraining from the needless expence of time or money, we should be enabled to contribute much more largely to the assistance of our brethren. None would then pine in want, neither would any be found friendless. The hardships flowing from prepossession and prejudice would cease : and the disappointments arising from the varying resolves, and the uncertainty of the attachments of men, would be no more ; for universal benevolence must be without partiality, and sincere love without hypocrisy.

From

From the perfection of this principle of SERM.
action, it may justly be inferred, that if it v.
pleased the Creatour of the world to reveal
a rule of life to mankind, this would be
found therein: Yet where is it to be met with
as the great law of behaviour, that to which
all others are reducible, and by their con-
sonance with which they are perfected, but
in the Christian Scriptures, or the sayings
of those who have borrowed from them?
And is it to be believed, that a few fisher-
men of Galilee could, without supernatural
assistance, have discovered and dilated, with
the most judicious accuracy, on a maxim,
the comprehensive simplicity and excellence
of which had escaped the sagacity and
earnest researches of the wisest of the
Greeks? Or, since they did teach the world
this great rule, Did they not, without con-
troversy, in thus delivering their Master's
words, speak as never men spake?

To the congruity of this principle to the
unvitiated affections and best reasonings of
the human mind, the bitterest enemies of
VOL. III. H the

SERM. the Gospel in our days, have borne most
 v. ample and unequivocal testimony, by adopt-
 ~~~~~ ing a pretension to it, as the surest mean of  
 making profelytes to their sect. But while  
 universal benevolence and brotherly love are  
 their ostensible motives, and their professed  
 aim is to make men happy, by making  
 them good, by not practising this principle  
 under the relations they already bear to those  
 around them, they both manifest the hypo-  
 crisy of their professions, and yield to all,  
 whose eyes the God of this world hath not  
 blinded, that they should not believe, a  
 fearful lesson against leaving the sure in-  
 struction of revelation, for fanciful motives  
 of action. When men, instead of trusting  
 the general happiness of the world to the  
 care of its almighty Governour, absurdly  
 and presumptuously extend their aims be-  
 yond the contracted sphere to which their  
 own powers can reach, far from preserving  
 the peace of society, and contributing to  
 the benefit of others, by neglecting the  
 humble, though real duties, of the indivi-  
 dual, and affecting a character of extensive  
 import-

importance, which belongs not to them, SERM.  
they disturb the tranquillity of the world, V.  
and are led to the commission of the most   
unpardonable aggressions, the most enormous crimes. Thus it is that these pretenders to benevolence have signalized themselves by the grossness of their transgression of every one of those commandments, obedience to which the apostle exhorts us to complete, by loving one another.

The honour due to parents, and the natural affection subsisting between individuals related by blood, they require all, who are sufficiently infatuated to associate with them absolutely to renounce ; thus destroying from among them all obedience to the first of the laws relating to our neighbour ; the second of these they set at naught, by putting to death, in any secure way, those who present themselves as powerful opponents to their pretendedly great, though, in truth, nefarious and horridly pernicious projects. The prohibition of adultery, it is well known, they have treated as of no

SERM. authority. And the uneſtimated plunder,  
v. the atrocious robberies of the armies under  
the direction of this ſect, whoſe object, it  
has been repeatedly declared, is like that of  
the ſect itſelf, the deſtruction of all the  
kings of the earth, ſufficiently prove, that  
their love is not manifeſted by tendereſs  
for the property of their neighbours. While  
the bitter calumnies with which they purſue  
all who attempt to expoſe their ſophiſtry,  
and put men on their guard againſt their  
impious and deſtructive plans, the railing  
accuſations they bring againſt all in autho-  
rity, and the diſtruſt they endeavour to ſow  
among thoſe, who, if united, would be  
ſtrong enough to cruſh their machinations,  
convict them, ſpite of all their pretenſions  
to benevolence, of bearing falſe witneſs.  
And, laſtly, their covetouſneſs has, it ſhould  
ſeem, been the grand motive for ſeizing the  
wealth, the power, and the firſt honours of  
the countries given by the divine juſtice  
into their hands: ſo perfectly have they, in  
their courſe, trampled under foot every law  
by which the perſons, the property, and

the

the rights of men are secured. Whereas, SERM.  
had they in fact rendered, as we are com- V.  
manded, love to every one, not one of these  
crimes would have been committed; they  
might have been harmless, and the world  
have had no complaint against them.

The apostolick injunction before us is, ye may easily perceive, calculated to prevent every aggression, to repress every crime in the very bud; nor could the force of it, for this purpose, be evaded, but by the introduction of a doctrine which St. Paul has forewarned every Christian to consider as holden by those whose damnation is just, that of doing evil that good may come of it. By this detestable tenet, men either arrogate to themselves the power of securing success to their measures, or profanely assert, that God will bless the wicked in their deeds, and patronize the transgressors of His own laws; when reason, experience, and Scripture, all join in teaching, that He who once presumes to break a commandment of the Lord, not only forfeits all claim

SERM. to, but really loses, in some degree, the  
V. divine assistance; that one transgression leads  
to another, diminishing our power of resisting temptation, and lessening our abhorrence of evil.

Let it be remembered, therefore, that the commandment we have received, to love one another, is universal: and that not merely as to its objects, but in respect likewise to the particulars in which we should manifest this love; in care of the property, respect to the rights, regard to the reputation, and attention to the feelings of our brethren. When we wilfully assault, or obstinately disregard any of these, we break the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" and be the excuses we may pretend, what they may, even if we plead, that we were seeking the honour of God, we are guilty of gross hypocrisy, in affecting to seek His honour through the breach of His commandments. Obedience to these is the mean by which perfect wisdom has ordained, that we should contribute  
to

to the general good : and while we mourn SERM.  
with those that mourn, and rejoice with V.  
those that do rejoice, we do not fancifully,  
but really contribute, to the general stock  
of comfort and happiness, and love not in  
word only, but in deed, and in truth.

How to make this the great principle of  
our conduct, we have received both instruc-  
tion and encouragement from Him in whom  
alone, of all the sons of man, our heavenly  
Father could be well pleased. He, far from  
becoming an aggressor, shewed His love  
even to His persecutors, by the patience  
with which He submitted to all the injuries  
they heaped on Him. When He was re-  
viled, He reviled not again ; when He suf-  
fered, He threatened not ; but pitied us,  
even when we were His enemies, and un-  
derwent miseries that belonged not to Him,  
that He might relieve us, while we were  
yet sinners ; and thus pitying us in our  
lowest state of misery, not of body only,  
but of soul, extended His solicitude for us  
beyond the present to a future state ; and

SERM. thus. exhibited to the human race a new  
 V. subject on which to exercise mutual bene-  
 volence, the attainment of happiness in another life. Zeal on this point it is, that particularly distinguishes the Christian. Whether in a private station as a parent, a master, or a friend, or in publick as a member of the commonwealth, or a magistrate, if he have any sense of the inheritance to which he is called with his brethren, he will not cease to rebuke, command, exhort, that men live soberly, righteously, and godly, as holding that blessed hope, and looking for the glorious appearance of Him who having died, that we might live for ever, has commanded us to love one another as He loved us ; And can we do this if we be thoughtless of the future fate, careless of the salvation of our brethren ? Herein, then, let our love be made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement ; because as He was, so are we in this world !

SER-




# SERMON VI.

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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I COR. XI. 26.

*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink  
this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till  
He come.*

WE read in the book of Exodus, that SERM.  
at the institution of the passover, VI.  
Moses commanded the children of Israel,   
saying, “ And ye shall observe this thing  
for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons,  
for ever. And it shall come to pass when  
ye be come to the land which the Lord will  
give you according as He hath promised,  
that ye shall keep this service. And it shall  
come to pass when your children shall say  
unto you, What mean you by this service?  
That


SERM. That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the  
VI. Lord's passover, who passed over the houses  
of the children of Israel in Egypt, when  
He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our  
houses." Now as the Israelites were thus  
taught to observe this service, and to in-  
struct their posterity both in the observance  
of it, and its meaning; so we Christians  
have been enjoined by Him who is the true  
Lamb of God, and of whom the paschal  
Lamb was but a type, ever to observe a  
service which He ordained, and the mean-  
ing of which is given us in the words of  
the text by one who received it from the  
Lord Himself. "As often as ye eat this  
bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the  
Lord's death till he come:" and thus as the  
Israelites, by celebrating their passover, ac-  
knowledge the deliverance which God  
wrought for them, when He smote the first  
born of Egypt, we, by celebrating the  
supper of the Lord, acknowledge and com-  
memorate the deliverance from sin and  
death, obtained for all who would accept  
it, by the sufferings and death of the Son  
of

of God. As long, therefore, as we retain SERM.  
any proper sense of the deliverance thus VI.  
wrought for us, as long as we entertain  
any just idea of the salvation thus purchased, so long it might be thought, we should readily join with pleased and grateful hearts in the service ordained for its commemoration. And if, in fact, the present conduct of many Christians wears a different aspect, it may, without injustice, be presumed, that “their love is grown cold,” and that they no longer know how to estimate the infinite mercy of God in their redemption, nor the unspeakable love of His Son in becoming a willing ransom for them.

Left this censure should seem harsh, I will now consider before you, the institution itself, and the end and uses of it, with the obligations thence arising to attend on it: and I am persuaded, from such a review, it will appear, that however the conscientious scruples of some few honest, though weak Christians, who are ever apprehensive

SERM. prehensive of being totally unfit to approach  
 VI. the Lord's table, may plead in their excuse,  
 yet much the greater part of those who  
 absent themselves from it, can set up no defence but what will prove their own criminality.

When our Lord was now about to lay down his life for the sins of the world, and while He was celebrating with His apostles the deliverance which the flock from whence He came, according to the flesh, had experienced in Egypt, He called their attention to a still more important deliverance, even that He was then going to accomplish for all the human race. For taking bread, and having blessed it, He brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you." Having taken the cup too, and given thanks, He gave them that likewise, that they all should drink of it, adding, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. This do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me." Such was the institution

stitution of the Lord's supper, before it had SERM.  
been, by the enthusiasm of some, and crafti- VI.  
ness of others, worked up into a tremendous   
mystery, and adorned with trappings to at-  
tract the admiration of the ignorant, and  
strike terroure into the weak ; and if we view  
it as such, we can never sufficiently admire  
either its simplicity, its wonderful signifi-  
cance, or that spirit of unexampled love  
that shines throughout it.

For what could be more plain, what farther removed from all probability of being changed into a superstitious ceremony, than the breaking of bread, and the drinking of wine ? Acts which occur every day, and to which, from their so frequently occurring, it was the less likely any particular meaning, but what was expressly declared, should ever be annexed. What requisition could the dying Master have made to his disciples, the compliance with which would have been less burdensome, or less difficult to be continued ? While the receiving of the bread and wine does so aptly apply to the thing  
for


SERM. for which it was ordained, a commemorative  
 VI. sign, that the most uninformed fol-  
 ~~~~~ lower of Christ cannot but comprehend its  
 significance. Bread is the principal sustenance of human life, the chief support of our bodies; wine is the invigorater of our spirits, the restorer of warmth and cheerfulness, after they have been banished by affliction or disease. Is it not then with peculiar propriety that these gifts of Heaven, by which our natural life is chiefly maintained, are made the representatives of that body and blood, by which our spiritual life must be supported, of which, if a man eat and drink, he shall live for ever, and of which, except we do eat and drink, we have no life abiding in us.

Behold a man, whose body is worn by fatigue, and emaciated by fasting, whose spirits are lowered by disease, or oppressed by sorrow; to such an one let the natural refreshments of bread and wine be imparted; his body recovers strength, his spirits revive, his countenance is gladdened: behold
 the

the sinner deep sunk in guilt and terrour, SERM.
his love of, and holy confidence in God, VI.
changed into fordid fear, his good principles and virtuous inclinations languishing, and his hopes of salvation near expiring; but see such an one washed in the blood of his Saviour, and made partaker of the benefits of his death, the languid flame of piety revives, encouraged by the hope of favourable acceptance, and all necessary assistance, he diligently cultivates every virtuous inclination; and steadily applies himself to the practice of every good work; and daily gathering fresh strength to run the race which is set before him, he aspires after that immortality of which he has here received the earnest.

But the similarity of the effects of our natural and spiritual food is not the only point in which the admirable significance of this sacred institution is apparent; for there prevails in it, too, a most powerful recommendation of that last and new commandment which our Lord, on the same night,
gave

SERM. gave to his disciples ; that they should love
VI. one another.



To partake of the same food, and drink of the same cup, have ever been esteemed tokens of unreserved friendship : and to bring men to spend those hours of ease and frankness together, has generally been thought a great step toward conciliating their minds, and uniting them in the bands of mutual regard. But with how much more reason may we expect the same effects, when the repast of which they partake is made with a peculiar meaning ? when all to whom the same bread, and same cup, are communicated, acknowledge by partaking of them, one baptism, one faith, one Lord ; confess that the great pursuit of their lives is the same, that their hopes are raised on the same foundation, and their conduct regulated by the same law ; and that one great commandment of this law is that which insists on the exercise of universal charity and brotherly love unfeigned ? And while the unity of our faith is thus signified,

fied, and the strictness of those bands of SERM.
affection, in which all the true members of VI.
Christ's church are holden together, ex-
pressed; the unparalleled love of their Savi-
our appears, through the same institution,
with the fullest lustre; for greater love than
this hath no man, that he should lay down
his life for his friends; yet when our Lord
was about to shew such love, He enhanced
the obligation on his disciples, (if it be
possible that it could be enhanced) by the
manner in which He directed them to com-
memorate it: no costly sacrifice has He re-
quired, no rigorous mortification has He
enjoined: to do that only in remembrance
of Him which may be of the highest use
to ourselves; so to recal to our minds His
mercies, as may render us capable of re-
ceiving all the benefits of them, and so to
keep Him in mind while absent, that we
may not be ashamed to meet Him when He
shall come again, is the sum of this His
precept!

SERM. And shall we persuade ourselves that it
 VI. is a matter of indifference whether we comply with such a precept? Or shall we, like some who call themselves Christians, say the command is spiritual only, and, under that pretence, neglect to obey it? Or shall we not rather, following the dictates of common sense and sober piety towards our Redeemer, endeavour to learn, from the consideration of the ends and uses of the institution, the obligations incumbent on ourselves to observe it?

The apostle tells us, that by this service we shew the Lord's death until He come; that we from time to time recal to our own minds, and testify to others our belief, that Christ suffered for our redemption; that we express the grateful sense we retain of this His love towards us; and testify our firm expectation, that He who already hath appeared in the form of a servant, and patiently borne persecution, misery and contempt, for our sakes, will again appear in glory, to reward with life and happiness
 eternal,

eternal, those who have obeyed the laws SERM.
He delivered, and followed the example He VI.
set, and to take vengeance on the despisers
of His cross, and the enemies of His
church.

Now if such be the end of the appointment, if the thus confirming of our faith, and the keeping alive of our gratitude and our hopes be uses of complying with it, (even were they the only ones) How could we neglect to do so, and yet stand excused? Are the mercies of Christ unworthy of remembrance? Is your faith so firm that it needs no additional strength to enable it to repel all the fiery darts of the wicked one? Are the benefits ye have received so deeply infixed in your hearts, that ye want nothing to recal you to a due sense of them? Or is your expectation of your Lord so lively, is your vigilance so great, that ye stand ever prepared to meet Him, and need not be reminded that He is near, even at the doors? But great as these uses are, much as I apprehend we all stand in need of such

I 2

assistance,

SERM. assistance, the confirming of our faith, the
 VI. keeping alive of our hopes by this act of
 commemoration, can never be the whole
 benefit to be derived from duely participating of this holy sacrament. Since our Lord hath said, “ He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him; and as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Words which, when compared with those of the apostle, “ the cup of blessing which we bless, Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ: the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” seem to convey to the true and worthy communicant, who does by faith feed on Him in his heart, and by this act shew forth that faith, a sure promise that the receiving of the bread and wine, of which he partakes, being verily and indeed accompanied by a participation of the body and blood of Christ, which, by these their symbols, he spiritually eateth and drinketh, (and spiritually only it should
 ever

ever be remembered, according to those SERM.
words of our Saviour to His disciples, VI.
when He had told them that so they must
do, “ It is the spirit that quickeneth, the
flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I
speak unto you, they are spirit, and they
are life”) the participation of them, I say,
shall be unto him the means of his be-
coming, in truth, alive unto righteousness,
of his receiving such a portion of the spirit
of Christ, as shall enable him to overcome
all intemperate passions, and cleanse his heart
from all evil inclinations, and prove in him
a fountain of piety, holiness, and righteouf-
ness : blessed effects, which the goodness
and power of God can as well annex to the
due and sincere performance of this re-
ligious act, as He could cleanse the Syrian
from his leprosy, by washing seven times
in Jordan !

Let not, then, the plain and simple means
by which these great and lasting benefits are
conveyed, offend us ! but let us rather glo-
rify the wisdom, and acknowledge the love

SERM. of our Master, who hath, by this one institution so easy of observance, provided for the confirmation of our faith, the conservation of our hopes, the encrease of our piety and holiness, and the improvement of our souls, as well as for preserving, in His church, that bond of peace and charity, in which He hath commanded all who would be truly His disciples, ever to be found. Since, to prevent the Christian, who is rich in this world's goods, from being proud of his opulence, and despising his poor brother, and to preserve this from being stung with envy at the prosperity of the other, What more apt could be devised than inviting both to the same table, where seeing that He who is equally the Lord of both has no respect of persons, they may learn rightly to estimate the present trifling difference that their lots in this world make between them, and as fellow-servants of the same Master, and expecting their last reward from the same hand, cheerfully proceed together through the performance of the different tasks allotted them?

Such,

Such, then, being the institution, such SERM.
the end and uses for which it was appointed, VI.
To what shall we ascribe that very great
and criminal neglect of it which is at pre-
sent visible among us? To ignorance of
the command it cannot be imputed; for
sufficiently plain to all is the precept, “Do
this in remembrance of me.” Neither can
the difficulty of compliance be more justly
alleged, since than that nothing can be
more easy: and I should hope there are
none so hardy as to esteem their Saviour’s
sufferings unworthy their recollection, or
to imagine they stand in no need of the
assistance of His Spirit to perfect the work
of their salvation. To what, then, shall
we attribute it? in part to want of con-
sidering the importance of the duty; and
in part to a consciousness of leading such
lives as renders them unworthy to join in a
service so sacred. To you who have hitherto
absented yourselves from the former of these
causes, I trust enough has been already said
to convince you of your error; and for
you, who sensible of the sinfulness of your
conduct,

SERM. conduct, thence dare not approach this holy
VI. table, let me beseech you to reflect, while
ye yet have power to reflect, since ye find
ye cannot serve at once Christ and Belial,
whose service ye should in wisdom choose?
Christ hath commanded you to commemorate
His death; this, ye say, the impurity
of your lives renders you unworthy to do:
but Christ hath also commanded you, to
repent and cleanse yourselves from sin. Can
your disobedience to this command serve as
a plea for your neglect of the other? Or
does not your unworthiness, by being voluntary,
become criminal also? St. Peter did,
on the plea of unworthiness, once hesitate
to comply with his Lord's will, in a case,
too, in which such hesitation must (if it
ever could be so) have been pardonable; But
what was our Saviour's judgement of it?
"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part
with me."

He who instituted the feast is the best
judge of the qualifications of those who
come to it; and the only one He requires
in

in us is, that we be his disciples, and con- SERM.
tinue in his words. If we become sincerely VI.
such, if we thus live in the true practice
of what He hath enjoined, the shewing his
death by this holy communion, will prove
to us a source of comfort inexpressible; for
we shall then look for the day of his coming
as for that of the arrival of the beloved and
gracious Master of the family of which
we are members, in whom are placed our
hopes of deliverance from whatever evils
we may at present feel, and our expectation
of peace, security, and perfect happiness.
But if our love in this world, if our un-
willingness to part with enjoyments that are
forbidden, or to practise the self-denial,
which religion in some cases requires, in-
duces us to reject the call, and despise the
invitation which the Lord hath given us,
What will be our confusion of face, when
He appears! Think, How shall we then
meet Him, with whose request so affec-
tionately made, and accompanied with every
circumstance to give it effect, we have thus
obstinately refused to comply! What sen-
tence

SERM. tence can we then expect from Him? What
VI. but the condemnation of those who are
lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,
everlasting banishment from the presence of
Him whose mercies we have thus con-
temned, and all the miseries consequent on
the wrath of God and the Lamb? Of the
power to avoid these, ye are yet possessed;
how long ye may continue so, God alone
knows; but if ye have any gratitude for
the benefits ye have already received, any
knowledge of the terrour of the Lord, any
care of your own salvation, delay no longer
to make use of it; repent and cleanse your-
selves from sin; prepare to receive the cup
of salvation, and call on the name of the
Lord!

SERMON VII.

ON THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

REV. XX. 12.


And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

THE very interesting and most awful SERM.
scene, thus revealed by the angel of VII.
his Lord to the beloved disciple John, has
so manifest a claim to our attention, that it
should seem needless to preface a discourse
on it with any of the customary exhortations,
that ye would seriously listen to the words
now

SERM. now to be addressed unto you. In subjects
VII. on which we sometimes speak, a part only
of our hearers may necessarily appear to
themselves concerned: with admonitions
against theft, and the various acts of dishonesty, those whose opulence removes from them all temptation to such instances of guilt, may think, they have little concern. With dissuasion from oppression, and the abuse of power, those who have none below them over whom they can tyrannize, may conceive, they have nothing to do. But in the judgement which all must undergo, all are interested; and if we consider mankind as distributed under the two great divisions of those, who hope to be acquitted, and those, who fear to be condemned, the latter cannot but be affected with horror at the mention of that solemn day in which the Son of man, seated on the throne of His glory, shall say unto those on His left hand, “Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:” nor the former, without a degree of extasy, anticipate

cipate that hour of triumph, when the SERM.
King immortal, awarding them crowns of VII.
glory, shall say unto those on His right hand, “ Come, ye blessed children of my
Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for
you from the beginning of the world.”
To encourage these to continue steadfast, im-
moveable, and always abounding in the
work which will secure to each of them
that crown which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will give to all that love His ap-
pearance, and to raise in those the proper
fruits of the fears with which they now
look forward to the day of trial, sincere
repentance, and timely preparation to meet
their God, are the ends of calling their
thoughts to that time when “ the judge-
ment shall sit, and the books be opened.”

It is well known to those who are ac-
quainted with the history of this part of
the world, when it was sunk in paganism,
that some wise and good men did, in the
very nature of things, discover ground of
assurance, that men would, after this life,
be

SERM. be differently recompensed, according to
 VII.  their works : the Gospel hath fully brought to light the doctrine on which they could form only uncertain conjectures ; and confirmed both the hopes and fears of nature, by authoritatively declaring, that “ God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness ;” and that the concluding act of the dispensations of the Deity, in respect to this globe, will be gathering together all the inhabitants of it, to receive a sentence which shall decide on their future situation, and make it for ever suitable to their conduct past ; and the sacred writers strive to impress this expectation on our minds, by mentioning several particulars of the solemn process, represented to us by images taken from human judicatures, and thus justly expressing to our understandings, circumstances, on the natural effect of which on our own minds, we may ourselves determine. Of these circumstances, the principal are included in the text, in speaking to which it is my intention to confine my discourse to the consideration

sideration of what must naturally be the SERM.
different feelings of the wicked, and of the VII.
righteous, when affected by the actual pre-
sence of them ; not meaning, however, to
restrain myself from adverting to other pas-
sages of scripture, which may contribute
to elucidate any thing but generally men-
tioned in this.


“ And I saw, saith the evangelist, the
dead, small and great, stand before God.”
Our blessed Saviour, in His own description
of this solemnity, particularises the glorious
train of the Almighty, that innumerable
company of angels, which by thousands of
thousands minister unto Him. Behold then
the assembly, before which ye must one
day appear, and without the terrors of
guilt to add to his confusion, What man is
there among us, that could face such a tri-
bunal, and not be appalled ? Consider who
will be on the throne ; God His self ; And
will not His excellency make you afraid ?
While it is difficult to conceive, it is *impos-
sible to describe*, what must then be the ter-

rors,

SERM. rours, the distress, and the anguish of the
 VII. infidel and the blasphemer, when behold-
 ~~~~~ ing the brightness of His glory, whose  
 vengeance they have so often dared, whose  
 existence they have so repeatedly denied,  
 they find themselves at length really sum-  
 moned to answer, face to face, for all the  
 hard speeches they have spoken against  
 Him.

Here we may well borrow the apostle's language, and ask, If those who obey the Gospel shall then hardly be saved, where shall the ungodly appear? If ye who have professed Christ in the world, who have acknowledged the authority, and joined in the worship of God, can only, with trembling hearts, approach His judgement seat; if ye who have constantly expected, and faithfully waited for it, find this, indeed, the great and the terrible day of the Lord; What will it be to those whom it overtaketh unawares; who believe not its approach, and who now mock at its terrors? On the haughty minds of those self-sufficient rea-  
 soners,



soners, with whom all faith is prejudice, SERM.  
all devotion superstition, all religion bigotry, VII.  
the shock produced when they find the   
sophistry in which they trusted refuted by  
fact, the belief they rejected justified, the  
fears they affected to despise realized, must  
be such as fully to answer that prophetic  
description given of the extremity of the  
dismay and confusion of the enemies of  
God and Christ, in their “ saying to the  
mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and  
hide us from the face of Him that sitteth  
on the throne, and from the wrath of the  
Lamb ; for the great day of His wrath *is*  
come, and who shall be able to stand.” To  
the thoughtless hearts of the profligate,  
who have been wont to treat as dupes all  
who submit to the restraints of the Gospel,  
the alarm raised by the awefulness of His  
visible presence, of whose sanctions and  
menaces they used to make so light, must  
exceed, beyond all comparison, the most  
sudden and the heaviest stroke which dis-  
appointment, danger, and affliction in this  
life, can produce.

SERM. Yet horrible as the first sensations of these  
VII. two descriptions of sinners must be on the  
disclosure of this tremendous scene, their  
poignancy must encrease, when they more  
closely compare the majesty and power of  
Him before whom they are arraigned, with  
the insults which they have offered to His  
dignity, and the disregard they have shewn  
to His authority. Neither will the cruci-  
fiers only of the Saviour of the world then  
be abashed at looking on Him whom they  
pierced; confusion of face will also be the  
just and inevitable portion of all who have  
rejected, all who have denied, all who have  
been backward to confess Christ before  
men: For how will such lift up their  
eyes to Him, to whom they preferred the  
favour of the world? When the smile of  
encouragement, and the clamour of ap-  
plause, uttered by dissolute companions,  
shall no more support their confidence?  
How will those who are wont with profane  
witticisms, to reflect on the truth, and  
ridicule the doctrine of Jesus, or even those  
who, with complacency, listen to these in-  
solent

solent returns of contempt for mercy, and enmity for love, when all being too intent on the wretchedness of their own situation to bestow a thought on others, the number of associates in sin shall cease to embolden, be able to stand in His presence? While, by the lateness of the period at which they are brought to a sense of their guilt, they shall be precluded from even saying with Job, “ I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes !”

Now although I would hope that no one present has reason to dread the being involved in the condemnation of the unbeliever or the scoffer, yet since it is of much more importance to us to consider, what is likely to befall ourselves, than what others will have to undergo; let me ask, Will it not then, think ye, recur to your minds, that ye yourselves have not, in every instance, manifested love so true, fidelity so sincere, or obedience so constant, as is justly due to

SERM. so great and so glorious a Master? Will  
 VII. not those trespasses, so inconsistent with  
 humble piety, unfeigned faith, and real  
 love of God, which ye now recollect, and  
 to which I am now endeavouring to awaken  
 your consciences, solely with a view of in-  
 ducing you to judge yourselves, that ye  
 may not be judged by the Lord, then press  
 themselves upon your mind? Reflect, there-  
 fore, in what instances ye have withholden  
 the homage due, in what insulted the Ma-  
 jesty, in what betrayed a backwardness to  
 profess the truth of God; nay, in what  
 even mistrusted His goodness; assured, that  
 His appearance will recal all these things  
 to your remembrance, and thus, at present,  
 take to yourselves a salutary shame for  
 offences, which, if not previously repented  
 of, will, in that day, force shame indelible  
 upon you.

The next particular of the text claiming  
 our consideration, is that of the persons we  
 are to meet before this supreme tribunal;  
 “the dead, small and great:” in whom  
 must

must necessarily be included all we have SERM.  
injured in any manner, either by personal VII.  
attack or oppression, by robbery or fraud,  
by calumny or insult, or even by wilful  
neglect. All these will rise up in judge-  
ment against us. And think, if we cannot  
now meet any one by whom we have dealt  
harshly, or to whom we have offered affront  
without being covered with confusion,  
through the consciousness of our miscon-  
duct, What will be the disturbance of our  
minds, when, in the presence of God and  
His holy angels, we are at once confronted  
with all who have just cause of complaint  
against us!

Here all ranks of men, those of every  
relation in society, may with propriety,  
should in charity, be called on to review,  
with the most serious impartiality, their  
past conduct, and their present habits; to  
examine themselves whether they have ren-  
dered to all their dues? Whether they con-  
tinue to owe no man any thing, but to love  
one another? and if in this their hearts

SERM. condemn them not, then may they have  
VII. confidence towards God, and boldness in  
the day of judgement. But if their love  
exist only in word or in tongue, and not in  
deed and in truth, such will their own  
hearts condemn; And how then shall they  
appear before Him, Who is greater than  
our hearts, and knoweth all things? How  
stand when those who were the objects of  
their feigned love, have to exhibit against  
them all the effects of deadly hatred? The  
general happiness, the good of mankind,  
are pleas to which we know, from experi-  
ence, the tyrant and the oppressor are  
equal; and they are pleas of love. Yet  
how will these pretenders support their  
pleas, when all who have been slaughtered  
through their ambition, all who have suf-  
fered by their exactions, all who have been  
afflicted by their oppression, shall with  
themselves appear before that judgement-  
seat, where there will be no respect of per-  
sons? Had the wicked only been subjects  
of their cruelty, yet those unjustly treated  
would rise again to their confusion; but  
when

when the harmless victims to their passions, SERM.  
or what is more, when those whom they VII.  
persecuted for professing the truth, and  
practising righteousness, for obeying God  
rather than man, shall present themselves  
before the throne of the universal Judge,  
how low then will the loftiest countenance  
fall; when those by whom they so little  
expected to be any more disturbed, whom  
they imagined they had finally crushed,  
shall, in reality, as the guilty Herod ground-  
lessly fancied of the holy Baptist, be risen  
from the dead; how will the mighty ones  
of the earth, who have so abused their  
power, be covered with astonishment and  
terror!

Compared with the total number of the  
race, few indeed are those, who have the  
opportunity of making whole nations feel  
the weight of their power, or the cruelty  
of their characters; still there are others,  
who within the limits of their influence or  
authority, narrow as they may be, are both  
rigorous and inexorable in their demands

SERM. on those below them; from whom a defenceless opponent finds no mercy; but who pursue, with unrelenting malice, those who have once incurred their resentment: against those petty tyrants, and other like species of oppressors, who, in sundry ways, take advantage of the unprotected state of the helpless to practise extortion upon them, there are, in holy writ, and especially in the book of Psalms, many appeals to the future judgement of the Lord: when He shall sit to decide on these appeals, and those who, under the justest causes of complaint here, were put to silence, shall meet their Oppressors before His throne, ye will hardly think that the dismay of these latter will prove such as could be too strongly expressed by any words in which I could endeavour to convey an image of it. Pursue the same thought even through more distinct particulars, and ye will thereby gain a juster and a more impressive idea of the horrors with which the guilty and impenitent must necessarily be surrounded in the day of retribution: horrors, from  
which



which nothing but such repentance as we <sup>SERM.</sup>  
are conscious is sincere, and firm faith in <sup>VII.</sup>  
God for its acceptance, can preserve those  
who have suffered themselves to become  
transgressours. Ye are sensible, that even  
fictitious scenes of divine vengeance will  
most powerfully affect the human mind;  
ye know, from experience, that when the  
tragick poet presents to the murtherer's eyes  
the apparition of the slaughtered sufferer,  
even the seeming terrours of the feigned  
criminal are, to a degree, contagious: from  
hence, then, ye may partly learn to estimate  
the distressful sensations of the real mur-  
therer, when he, who the last time he be-  
held him, was expiring under his relentless  
hands, shall be called from the grave, and  
by his very presence pray a sentence from  
their common Judge.


Let not, however, the approaching situa-  
tion of the criminals already noticed, dread-  
ful as it is, absorb all your attention; the  
future feelings of the robber and fraudulent,  
deservedly claim some of it. For as these,  
like

SERM. like the former, frequently contract an hardness of heart, which fortifies them against shame and remorse during the whole of their continuance on earth, so must the severity of the shock which they will experience, when this fancied security is suddenly done away by the appearance of those they have wronged before the throne of God, be proportioned to their former obduracy. Numerous are the publick robberies, but still more so are the secret thefts of which the guilty never have, nor in this world ever will be discovered; yet both these combined are outnumbered by the frauds that escape human detection: for the consciences of the criminals remonstrate not loudly enough at present to betray them. Let such, however, recollect, while they are in the way with their adversaries, that unless they now repent, and make reparation, or if this be out of their power, at least do the former with sincerity, when they shall hereafter meet them before an all-seeing Judge, the craft through which they have here lain concealed, the subterfuges

fuges and false pleas by which they now SERM.  
strive to quiet the misgivings of their own VII.  
hearts, being no longer of avail, the sight  
of those whom they have pillaged, or on  
whom they have imposed, will at once har-  
row up their souls, and put an end for ever  
to that deceitful calm by which they were  
lulled to their destruction.

Neither ought the probable sensations of  
another tribe to be passed over unnoticed ;  
those, I mean, who delight in what may  
justly be termed the mischief of the tongue.  
Many are there in the world who suffer in  
their reputation, in their peace, and in their  
fortunes, from idle tales, false reports, or  
malicious suggestions, the authours of  
which continue unknown, and in numerous  
cases even unsuspected ; but of whom it is  
almost equally difficult to say, what plea-  
sure they can now find in the wrongs they  
commit, and the unhappiness they occasion,  
and what pangs they will feel, when those  
whose secret enemies they have been, shall  
with them stand, ready to receive the final  
sentence

SERM. sentence from Him who judgeth rightly !

VII.  Sufficiently severe ye will undoubtedly conceive, must be the afflicting sense that even these criminals will then have of their own deserts, and of the disgrace and condemnation impending over them : but all consideration of their distressful feelings, will vanish on the mention of those which, in the same hour, will be the portion of others who have employed their speech to still more pernicious purposes ; the men, I mean, whose powers of persuasion have been exerted in misleading the ignorant and unwary into transgression, or in seducing the unsuspecting and innocent from the paths of righteousness. When the victims which the nefarious cruelty of such have immolated to their passions, shall, by the agonizing terrors with which they anticipate the sentence due to their own crimes, bear testimony to the deeper guilt of those who caused them to offend, the lashes with which the seducers will then be scourged by their consciences must, ye are sensible, prove such as no comparison drawn from  
the

the scorpion whips, with which the most SERM.  
inventive poets have armed their feigned VII.  
ministers of vengeance, can reach; it is  
inspiration alone that will supply an adequate image, by teaching us to call their sufferings the commencement of everlasting burnings.

Still there is an aggravation that may be added even to the mental sufferings of these; an aggravation which may at first, perhaps, occur to only a few among you; but in your opinion of which, when once mentioned, all will unite: it is in cases where the persons so miserably betrayed to their own ruin, had peculiar claims to the protection of the very wretches that seduced them. This stroke, ye may justly think, carries the picture of human infamy to its utmost height, and, consequently, prognosticates the most acute misery in the breast of the guilty, when the blood of those, who through them perish in their iniquities, is about to be required at their hands. But, alas! for the human race! How great  
simili-

SERM. similitude to this transgression is born by  
VII. conduct that prevails far and wide among  
us ! For are not those betrayed into sin by  
the very persons who are most strictly  
bound to guard them against transgression ;  
whose trespasses are owing to the want of  
the instruction and discipline which their  
parents have neglected to give them ? And  
are not those, indeed, seduced into it, whom  
the bad example of their parents has, from  
their infancy, taught and encouraged to  
trample on the laws of God ? Consider,  
therefore, while the reflection can produce  
something more beneficial to yourselves than  
ineffectual remorse, what anguish will, in  
that day, pierce the hearts of those parents  
who receive from their children trembling  
on the brink of the gulph of everlasting  
perdition, a glance of reproach, charging  
them with being the authours of the end-  
less misery into which their unhappy off-  
spring are going to be plunged. Let high  
and low, rich and poor, listen to the calls  
thus made on them, to pay every attention  
that can prevent their children from taking

the paths of error and of vice—let them SERM.  
no longer prefer fashion to christianity ; nor VII.  
the chance of their success in this world,  
to the hope of their everlasting happiness  
in the next. Let not the imbecility of your  
own minds ruin them by indulgence ; much  
less permit the contagion of your example  
to draw them from the narrow path of  
virtue—but check every propensity to these  
things by recollecting, that the day is ap-  
proaching, when the guilt of them would  
draw on you looks of unutterable complaint  
from those to whom ye have given birth,  
reproaching you with nothing less than  
having changed the existence of them who  
looked up to you as the guides, because ye  
were the authours of their lives, into an  
everlasting curse.

Although inexpressible, as ye already per-  
ceive, must be the confusion and distress of  
the guilty arising from the single circum-  
stance of being brought to face all who  
have just cause of complaint against them,  
yet we cannot appreciate the wretchedness  
of

SERM. of their situation as we ought, without  
VII. taking into consideration the next circum-  
stance mentioned in the text; that of those  
books being opened, in which the things  
as yet unknown to the persons against  
whom they were committed, are contained.  
But the feelings necessarily to be produced  
by the certain expectation of such a disclosure,  
must be considered on some future opportunity.  
I can detain you no longer at present than to beseech you immediately to  
turn to that line of conduct, which is pre-  
scribed by the knowledge of the circumstances  
laid before you in the present discourse, “that the Lord hath prepared His  
seat unto judgement,” and that those who  
sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.  
Even while I have been speaking to them,  
it may possibly have occurred, that in re-  
spect to some persons towards whom ye  
have neglected it, it is no longer in your  
power to follow our blessed Lord’s direc-  
tion, if thy brother have ought against thee,  
go first, be reconciled unto him. Let there-  
fore the uncertainty of your being able to  
make



make reparation for any future trespasses, SERM.  
and your consciouſness that it is impossible VII.  
to do ſo for ſome that are paſt, have their  
due effects in teaching you caution and  
humility, that through the former ye may  
avoid adding to your guilt, and by the  
latter, deprecate that indignation which  
your miſconduct hath already merited. This  
admonition is applicable to us all. But for  
any who may be conſcious of any of the  
more atrocious inſtances of guilt to which  
I have alluded, let ſuch take the only meth-  
od of eſcaping the miſery of which I  
have been endeavouring to give you an uſe-  
ful, though I could attain to the deſcription  
of no other than a moſt inadequate and  
faint idea; let them follow the example of  
the holy pſalmiſt, in immediate and ſincere  
repentance; let them call their own ways  
to remembrance, and make haſte, and turn  
their feet unto the teſtimonies of the Lord,  
“ Becauſe He cometh, becauſe he cometh  
to judge the world with righteouſneſs, and  
the people with His truth.”



# SERMON VIII.


ON THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

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REV. XX. 12.

*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

WHEN I before addressed you on this SERM.  
aweful and important subject, I pro- VIII.  
posed to confine my discourse to an enquiry  
into, what feelings must naturally be excited  
in our minds by each of the circumstances,  
which the evangelist has enumerated in the  
words of the text; and I accordingly, at  
that time, proceeded to investigate those  
which,

SERM. which, we must suppose, will arise on  
 VIII.  finding ourselves arraigned before the throne  
 of God, and confronted with all to whom  
 we have, in this life, given just cause of  
 complaint against us. The next to be con-  
 sidered are the sensations which we must  
 expect to experience on the opening of the  
 records of our conduct: these, indeed, the  
 sinners, with an high hand, those who have  
 learned to make a mock at sin, may defy,  
 as thinking themselves past what they are  
 pleased to call such weakness; but in all  
 others, the very sense of shame justifies a  
 hope of their repentance, and yields encour-  
 agement to suppose, that in many breasts  
 serious consideration of what all who will  
 not prepare in time to meet that day, must  
 then undergo, may produce the most bene-  
 ficial effects.


Suppose yourselves at once, then, in the  
 situation described, the secrets of your hearts  
 going to be disclosed, and God about to  
 judge openly not only all your actions and  
 every word, but the concealed motives of  
 these,

these, those inmost thoughts of your breasts SERM.  
which ye have never ventured even to VIII.  
whisper to a friend. For of all these our  
blessed Lord and His apostles have assured  
us we shall render account: “ There is  
nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ;  
neither hid, that shall not be known. What-  
soever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be  
heard in the light, in the day when God  
shall judge the secrets of man by Jesus  
Christ, according to the Gospel.”

The certain assurance of such an examination will raise in our minds reflections on the impurity and guilt of the natural man, that will convince us of the absolute necessity of expiation and sanctification by some means far above our own power, and, consequently, dispose us gladly to receive those which God hath been pleased to appoint, the blood of His Son, and the grace of His Holy Spirit ; that our sins being blotted out in that day, we may not be partakers of the agonizing feelings then excited by the manifestation of deeds, the perpetrators

SERM. of which, by escaping the knowledge of  
VIII. the world, have been misled into a deceitful  
hope, that their crimes would lie ever concealed. For how will every wretch then, to whose undivulged crimes neither remission has been granted on repentance, nor amendment produced by merciful correction, be seized with terror at the discovery made of his iniquities ! How will those who have encouraged themselves in sin, by saying, “ No man shall see us,” be confounded, when the volumes of transgression are opened !

Let but each of the guilty recollect what crime it is that he most earnestly wishes to keep concealed from the world, then let him lay it to his heart, that this very fault, of the discovery of which the least danger now fills his breast with tormenting anxiety, shall then be brought to light before the whole assembly of heaven and of earth ; and it may be hoped, the anticipated horrors he will feel, will produce the most fervent exertions to prevent, by sincere contrition

trition and real reformation, the actual dis- SERM.  
grace and unbounded misery, which will VIII.  
otherwise burst like a tempest upon him. 

“ The word of God,” saith St. Paul,  
“ is quick and powerful, and sharper than  
any two-edged sword, piercing even to the  
dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of  
the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner  
of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”  
Now this truth is more especially experi-  
enced by us, when those passages of holy  
writ are repeated, in which mention is made  
of the last judgement: the word of God  
then, indeed, directs all our attention to the  
danger of our own situation; sends us into  
ourselves, and turns up to our view all  
those trespasses which lay buried in our  
hearts under the cares or the pleasures of  
life. Do not ye yourselves now bear wit-  
ness to the justice of these assertions? Are  
not the thoughts of each of you, at this  
moment, employed on those secret sins  
which I am warning you God will then set  
in the light of His countenance? Consider,

SERM. therefore, the unpleasantness of your present feelings as but a very slight foretaste of those which await the careless, the obstinate, the impenitent, when deeds now unsuspected shall be proclaimed, authors of mischief now unaccused discovered, and the most mysterious transactions of this life unravelled, and all the actors in them charged with their peculiar guilt.

VIII.

It is in this world often used as a consolation by the friends of those who have committed any shameful deed, that the disgrace of the culprit will be known only to a few, that industry and caution will prevent the fame of it reaching far—But how short a time will this studied concealment last! the veil which the partial benevolence of earthly friends thus spreads, will, by the justice of the heavenly Judge, quickly be torn asunder! Men much experienced in the ways of the world, are now wont to deem the earth little better than one continued scene of imposition; But what will it appear, then, when to the pretended confidence



fidence of many of the enemies of religion, will be opposed private acts of a fear worthy to be laughed at ; when past reputation for sanctity, self-denial, meekness, and other virtues, shall at once vanish on the disclosure of deeds which shall leave the guilty no higher honour than that of excelling in dissimulation, and not too, perhaps, without the additional mortification of having themselves declared the authours of evils, of which they themselves entertained no idea, when they ventured on the transgressions that caused them ! Of this, at least, I conceive we need have little doubt in regard to that vice which, in the apostle's phrase, sets the world on fire, the misuse of the tongue, when the circumspection expressed by, “ I would not have it known that I was the person who said it,” can no longer be of avail. When the authour of every slander, the wilful propagator of every calumny shall be dragged to light, when those who with mischievous ingenuity have devised, and with malicious joy watched over the success of false reports to another's hurt,

SERM.

VIII.




SERM. hurt, shall, by the records of Heaven, be  
 VIII. convicted of these diabolical practices,  
 which they had safely carried on in defiance  
 of human enquiry, their confusion must  
 be such that any attempt to describe it  
 would demonstrate a most inadequate sense  
 of its greatness. For will not all who have  
 by their means been misled, and induced to  
 believe or retail their fictions, all who  
 thereby have been brought to act with dis-  
 trust or unkindness to those who were falsely  
 accused, all who in any way suffered by  
 the disagreements and contests which their  
 falsities occasioned, stand as appealing against  
 them to Him before whom the false tongue  
 is an abomination?

But if, in such distress the lying lips  
 shall begin to have their reward, What por-  
 tion of anguish will, at the same hour, seize  
 on the deceitful heart? Of His judgement  
 who knoweth what is in man, not only the  
 actions and the words of His creatures will  
 be subjects, but even their motives; or to  
 speak more correctly, these more especially  
 than

than the former, since, by them alone, the SERM.  
desert of the other can be tried. It can VIII.  
scarcely have escaped your observation, that  
by the image of our being judged out of  
those things which are written in the books,  
is expressed the accuracy with which will  
be brought to light every circumstance that  
is necessary to justify, before men and angels,  
the sentence to be pronounced on the con-  
demned: and in those respecting their mo-  
tives is particularly contained the guilt of  
hypocrites. Since their crime consists spe-  
cifically in pretending other motives for  
their behaviour than those from which they  
really act. To how many various species  
of these criminals the anguish of detection  
will then reach, it would be difficult to say:  
for though we most frequently use hypo-  
crisy for a false shew of religious principle,  
yet it seems by no mean proper to confine  
it to that; since the enemies of all religion  
(an host that now appears to encrease daily)  
assume a love of truth, and desire to free  
men from the bondage of superstition, as  
the motives of their conduct. What then  
will

SERM. will be the astonishment of their admirers !

VIII.  What their own confusion ! When it shall appear that in reality pride or vanity ruled their hearts, and directed their operations ; or that the very righteousness of the law which they opposed, by forbidding the gratification of their passions, made them so adverse to it ! How severe must be the mortification of having all the admiration, for which men have in this life been wading through the depths of hypocrisy, suddenly annihilated by its being manifested, that not the motives for which they received so much praise, but others widely different swayed their minds !

Here let the guilty of every kind of insincerity reflect on the disgrace they are preparing for themselves ; let not the tribute of applause they now receive for their assumed characters, blind them to their own destruction : let not vain glory cause you to prefer the present praise of man to the approbation of Him who seeth not as man seeth. For how miserable will be the state  
of

of those, who having here ostentatiously displayed their good works, shall then have nothing new to balance all the concealed faults then first disclosed! But far more wretched that of all who, under a fair semblance, have passed through life prosecuting the views of self-interest alone. By discoveries like these will many that are now first then be last, and numbers who before they fell asleep were honoured, will awake to everlasting contempt.

SERM.  
VIII.  
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Guilt does, in this world, not only experience great forbearance, but through the prevailing number of culprits, receives no small countenance; but when at the restitution of all things on the side of virtue, there shall appear not only all the righteous sons of Adam, but superiour beings innumerable, headed by Him to Whom all iniquity is abomination, With what sensations will sinners then endure that publication of their vileness, which shall finally stamp their characters in the presence of those who will view them with the most unequivocal

SERM. unequivocal disgust? Recollect, therefore,
 VIII. that how easy soever we may now find it
 ~~~~~ to impose on others, by doing this in any  
 manner, we shall only deceive ourselves  
 more miserably; because a little while, and  
 the frauds practised on them shall be set  
 right; but the effects of these mistakes of  
 our own must be everlasting; for behold,  
 on conviction, sentence is to follow!

The sufferings of mind produced by great disappointment and other severe misfortunes, are such as no man would be willing needlessly to undergo; but compare the greatest misery these can occasion here with the regret, the anguish, and the despair, which must arise on hearing our heavenly Judge decide against us, and the former will appear as nothing. Then will many who now think present enjoyment, or worldly profit, only worth their attention, begin to bewail the folly of their choice, to lament the opportunities they have missed, the happiness they have lost, “ We have erred (they will then say) from the way of  
 truth;

truth; we have wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction. What hath pride profited us? Or what good have riches with our vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow!" When they behold multitudes, which no man can number, come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and see themselves thrust out; think, timely and effectually think, what will then be the torments of their hearts. When in the separation which our blessed Saviour hath told us, He will then make among all nations, dividing them as a shepherd divideth his sheep from his goats, they see those whom they were wont to despise preferred before them by the unerring judgement of our divine Master, when they find the very maxims they used to laugh at, the conduct they used to ridicule, crowned with the supreme reward of His approbation, Will they not, when they behold the servant of God thus exalted, repenting


SERM.  
VIII.

SERM. penting and groaning for anguish of spirit,  
 VIII. naturally say within themselves, “ This  
 ~~~~~ was he whom we had sometimes in deri-  
 sion, and a proverb of reproach : we fools
 accounted his life madness, and his end to
 be without honour : now is he numbered
 among the children of God, and his lot is
 among the faints !”

Far be it from me to exhibit a needless
 scene of horror to your minds ; but since
 the day is fast coming on us all, in which
 we shall necessarily stand in our lot, either
 on the right or the left hand of the judge-
 ment-seat, according to our works, every
 call to reflection should be used, every topic
 should be discussed which is likely to pre-
 vail on you to prepare to meet your Judge ;
 and therefore, I now put it to your hearts
 again, Should not yourselves, think ye, in
 the case just stated, feel the same distress,
 and make nearly the same reflections that I
 have repeated ? Would not the dread of
 the punishments to which ye were about to
 be consigned, overwhelm you with tribu-
 lation

lation and anguish? Or could the fearful SERM.
doom, the irrevocable sentence, “ Depart VIII.
from me ye workers of iniquity into ever-
lasting fire prepared for the devil and his
angels,” be received but with weeping and
gnashing of teeth?

I have, indeed, been hitherto able only to consider one part of the judgement described in the text, that which is calculated to excite in you fear, circumspection, and timely effort to avoid being involved in it—the opening of the book of life, in which may God grant we all may find our names written, (and if we do not it will be our own fault) and the joy attending both the hope and the hearing of our sentence out of that, may hereafter be investigated. For the present I must conclude with exhorting you to let the nearness, and the manifest signs of the approach of this great day, when a new arrangement of men and things will determine our lot for ever, make a beneficial impression on your hearts.

SERM. The interval in which any of us may
VIII.  have it in our power thus to prepare ourselves for judgement, will at most be extended not to many years, while to some but a few remain ; and we are all uncertain, whether we may not be called to-morrow, or even to-night ; yet come when it will, we know, we must obey the summons. Viewing circumstances in this manner, therefore, to each individual of us our Judge standeth nigh, even at the door. And for the tokens of the coming of that day upon all the inhabitants of the earth, the equity and the mercy of God have provided, ever since He declared His purpose to judge the world, that no generation of Christians should pass without sufficient warning to expect it, the cares and the pleasures of this life may make us inattentive to them, and we may think, that had we lived in earlier ages we should have been so stricken with the signs and wonders then wrought, as to have had our souls alive to the hope of our Lord's return. But as our predecessors in the middle ages were, by having no gain-
fayers

fayers to disturb their faith, placed on a SERM.
level with those who went before them, VIII.
but whose confidence, in the midst of oppo-
nents, was supported by recent miracles ;
so we, by the accumulating testimony of
prophecies now rapidly accomplishing in
the world, have a light shining on us, suf-
ficient to guide us through all the difficul-
ties, which the prevailing apostacy of the
times throws in our way. We have only
to be sincere and earnest in making due use
of it, then far from our divine Master's
coming in a day that we think not of, and
in an hour that we are not aware, and giving
us a portion with the unbelievers, He will
find us watching, and verily we shall be
numbered among those blessed servants unto
whom He will give a crown of life !

SERMON IX.

ON THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

REV. XX. 12.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

HAVING already endeavoured, in two SERM.
discourses on these words, to impress IX.
on your minds an effectual sense of the tribulation, anguish and despair, which the circumstances of judgement thus depicted by the evangelist, may naturally be expected to raise in the souls of all, who shall have
M 3 neglected

SERM. neglected to lay hold on mercy during the
 IX. day of falvation; it now remains to call
 your attention to the more pleasing scene,
 which an innumerable company even of
 such as were sometime finners, but have
 been washed, sanctified, and justified in the
 name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit
 of our God, will as necessarily exhibit
 through the rapturous feelings of their
 hearts at the glorious appearance of Him,
 in Whom, though they have not seen Him,
 they yet have believed.

Reflection suggests, and revelation confirms the suggestion, that judgement will overtake us as death found us; I mean that during the intermediate state, neither our characters, nor the nature of our expectations, will undergo any change: for as on the one hand, “ Repentance in the grave there is none;” so on the other, “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!” The contrast, therefore, which appears between the sinner and the righteous in their last moments in this state, will be continued in
 the

the next ; and by considering the sensations SERM.
of the latter, as directly contrary to those IX.
of the former, we shall, perhaps, arrive
more nearly than by any other way, at a
just idea of the joy and exultation which
they, who love His appearance, will feel,
when they shall awake up after the likeness
of Him, who hath redeemed them out of
every kindred, and tongue, and people, and
nation.


As astonishment, confusion, and terroure,
seem the effects to be expected in the breasts
of the infidel and the blasphemer, on find-
ing themselves actually before the throne
of their heavenly Judge, so joy, compla-
cency, and the most delightful anticipation
of permanent security, and encreasing hap-
piness, will naturally arise in the heart of
every faithful servant on the sight of his
divine Master. To say, that human lan-
guage cannot express the triumphs of that
day, is saying but little indeed, since there
is no reflecting mind which will not, on
experiment, find all its powers of imagina-

SERM. tion totally unable to form any satisfactory
 IX. idea of the exultation which must be the
 portion of those who have believed, when
 He who is now gone to prepare a place for
 them shall, according to His promise, come
 again in glory, “ to take them unto Him-
 self, that where He is there they may be
 also.”


Ye know how much the heart may be
 elated with imaginary honour, and the false
 glories of this world ; ye are conscious how
 grateful to the human mind is a victory in
 any contest, and what self-gratulation arises
 even from being able to convince an oppo-
 nent in debate, that the proposition we
 maintained is right. What then must be
 the justly-founded raptures of those, who
 having fought the good fight in this life,
 and contended for the truth, shall see the
 palm given to their arguments, and their
 confidence established, by the sitting of that
 tribunal, the expectation of which they
 boldly confessed, and to whose decisions they
 were wont resolutely to appeal ? in lieu of
 4 the

the shrieks of dismay then uttered by the SERM.
enemies of the Gospel, Will not the victo- IX.
rious foldiers of Christ, at this fight, be
ready, in triumphant accents, to exclaim,
“ Lo, this is our God, we have waited for
Him, and He will save us: this is the
Lord, we have waited for Him, we will
be glad, and rejoice in His salvation.”

In proportion to the sufferings they passed through for His sake, must be their joy at beholding their Deliverer—the weight of contumely which has been thrown on them, the bitterness of the mortifications they have endured, the severity of the provocations they have withstood, will, according to their measure, all contribute to the encrease of their bliss, on finding that the hour of their redemption is arrived. Then will be understood the saying that is written, “ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake! And blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake!” Then will ye
who

SERM. who have been sincere in your obedience to
IX. the doctrine of Christ, begin to experience
 the extensiveness of those blessings which
He promised to such as would listen to His
words. How the poor in spirit, the mourn-
ers, and the meek, can properly be pro-
nounced blessed, will then no longer need
explanation; their extasies at the visible
presence of Him whose example they en-
deavoured to follow through sufferings, will
prove that their past afflictions were but the
seeds of joy. For if the mere ceasing of
oppression, be a relief often earnestly wished
for; if death be desired as a refuge from
the cruelty of men, and the evils of the
world, What will be your rejoicing who
now suffer for others, or mourn within
yourselves, when ye behold Him seated on
the throne of power, to whose protection
ye have so often commended yourselves,
whose promise ye have, that He will wipe
away your tears?

Cause enough for the righteous soul to
grieve has the world ever yielded, from the
shedding


shedding of the blood of Abel to the death SERM.
of the latest, who have perished in inno- IX.
cence, or the cause of truth; but if ever 
there were days that more peculiarly excited
the feelings of the pious; if ever there
were a time in which the enormity of trans-
gressions caused those who hunger, and
thirst after righteousness, those who are
merciful, and those who are pure in heart,
to sigh and look upward, our own are
such: from the disgust, then, which ye
conceive at the attempts made in these days
to eradicate from among men every prin-
ciple, and every symptom of piety; from
the horrors with which ye are stricken at
the nefarious mockeries of justice, at the
promiscuous and extensive slaughters that
have now been perpetrated; from the an-
guish of spirit with which ye hear the de-
tails of the blasphemies, the cruelties, and
the impurities in which those who have re-
nounced God and His Christ now glory;
Estimate the relief ye will hereafter experi-
ence, the joy which will spring in your
hearts, the delight which will pervade your
breasts,

SERM. breasts, when ye behold (in the language
IX. of the prophet) the Sun of righteousness
arise with healing in His wings, and ordering to be gathered out of His kingdom all things which offend, and them which do iniquity, establish that everlasting dominion of His own, which shall never pass away. Neither will ye whose souls are now grieved at dissensions which ye cannot heal; at quarrels and strife, the bitterness of which ye cannot assuage, feel less relief, when ye perceive an end at once put to the wide extended miseries that spring from these, by the appearance of that Prince of peace, of the increase of whose government there shall be no end.

And thus behold the first part of your future happiness necessarily taking its degree from what ye in this life suffer through your virtues! Go now, and complain of the hard service of religion; murmur at the self-denial which the Gospel prescribes; it forbids, ye may say, the gratification of even natural appetites; it prescribes a sobriety


briety of conduct most irksome to the lovers SERM.
of pleasure, most intolerable to the votaries IX.
of fashion; harshly contradictory to the
maxims of the world, it treats as of no
worth qualities highly esteemed among
men, and insists on practices which invite
insult, and a temper that provokes imposi-
tion: but remember, that this burthen,
whatever it be, will to those (and to those
only) who endure it to the end, work a far
more exceeding weight of glory! Ye may
shrink from the trial, if such be your
choice, but verily those alone who finish
the course can be crowned!

When enquiring into the probable sensa-
tions of the wicked at the awful season we
are considering, it appeared, that the more
particular we made our investigation, the
greater seemed the threatened horrors that
await them. The contrast between the im-
penitent and the righteous will even, in this
circumstance, hold good; for carry on your
thoughts to the next particular of the text,
that of the persons who will be assembled
before

SERM. before the judgement-seat of Christ, and
IX. conceive, if ye can, the joy it must give
 you at this most important, and last needful
day, to find a sufficient number around you
who would testify, that when hungry, ye
fed; when thirsty, ye gave drink to; when
naked, ye clothed; when strangers, ye re-
ceived; when sick and in prison, ye visited
those, of whom, your Judge has declared,
that He will consider such good offices done
to them, as performed towards Himself!
Those undescribed sensations which ye feel
on performing acts of benevolence, are,
doubtless, attached by our ever-blessed
Creatour to such practices, that they may
serve us as incitements to make unto us
friends by the Mammon of unrighteousness,
that they may receive us into everlasting
habitations; and the happiness with which
the consciousness of such good works fill
your hearts at present, ye may well consider
as a foretaste, however slight, of the abun-
dant felicity awaiting you, when He, whose
commandment to love your brethren, ye
have obeyed, appearing to take account of
His

His servants, ye see yourselves surrounded SERM.
by such as will bear you witness, that ye IX.
have not been barren nor unfruitful in the
knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to the strains in which the great apostle of the Gentiles anticipates the happiness he expected to derive from some, to whom he had been made the minister of good. “ For what (saith he) is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy!” So to all who have been willing instruments of the divine mercy, in ministering to the natural or moral wants of men, whether by relieving the poor, instructing the ignorant, or reclaiming the transgressors, shall the appearance of those to whom they are conscious of having thus performed the task their Lord hath enjoined them, yield joy and glory, when their eyes meeting the grateful looks of those who, by their well-timed bounty, were preserved from giving way to temptations to dishonesty
that

SERM. that then pressed sore upon them, or by
IX.  their lessons were delivered from the deceit-
fulness of error, and all the dreadful consequences of impious maxims, or by their friendly warnings and earnest admonitions, converted from sin unto righteousness, shall, from the humble confidence of their countenances, inform them of the blessed effects of their charitable exertions. What exultation, what a crown of rejoicing, will they not then find in works, which, though here perhaps little noticed, have followed them to the throne of judgement ! And if such kindness to whom ever exercised, shall then whisper peace and joy to your souls, where it has produced its intended effects on those to whom we are more nearly related in the flesh, Will not the knowledge of them raise sensations directly opposite to the anguish and the horror which await the negligent parent, and the faithless guardian ? Will not ye who have taught your children and your households to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgement, who have endeavoured to infuse into their
hearts

hearts not the love of the world, but the love of God, and directed their attention beyond those which are seen, to the things which are not seen, in that hour rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, over those whom ye yourselves directed to the path of life?

SERM.
IX.

Rapturous, indeed, will be the feelings springing from this source, yet must they receive encrease from the next succeeding circumstance in this great process, the opening of the books; by which the characters of the righteous will be cleared not only from the reflections of the invidious, and the misrepresentations of the malicious, but from the degrading, though groundless imputations, of the ignorant and the foolish, who, under the proud affectation of pity, often censure conduct, of which the motives are sufficiently exalted, to be far above out of their sight.

The victories of the righteous are chiefly gained over himself, and, consequently,

SERM. make neither noise or appearance in the
IX. world, though the measures necessary to
them may often require a conduct, to which
the dissolute or the thoughtless will readily
apply the opprobrious terms of unsocial,
niggardly, and spiritless. But be of good
courage, ye who seek not the praise of
men; the less known to the world your
present labours are, the greater shall be your
glory before the throne of Him in whose
sight ye wish to stand approved; your hea-
venly Father Who seeth in secret, will re-
ward you openly: and “when the book
of life is opened, with great boldness will
ye stand before the face of such as afflicted
you, and made no account of your labours!”
Often, in the anguish of your souls, have
ye appealed to the judgement of your God,
for the innocence of your conduct, for the
rectitude of your intentions; often com-
plained of the cruelty of the suspicions en-
tertained, and of the slanders uttered against
you; how your words have been misinter-
preted, your deeds misrepresented, and your
good evil spoken of; but behold the hour
cometh,

cometh, when for all your griefs, ye shall receive more than double, at the hand of Him who judgeth rightly ! Think, what will then be your joy, when you receive the authoritative assurance, that the end ye fought in all labours is secure ! What your ecstasy on hearing your names announced among those that are written in Heaven ! We know from numerous examples, that tidings of great joy can excite sensations so exquisitely great, as in our present frame cannot even be supported ; What then shall we think of the feelings of those who, without fainting under it, will experience a happiness to which the highest this state can yield, will bear no comparison !

And yet great, inconceivably great, as this must be, judge ye, whether it will not be augmented by hearing any whom we have loved in this state, called to the same happy lot. Neither entertain in your hearts any misgivings that the enjoyments of the righteous from the last circumstance, will be at all counterbalanced by their sorrow

SERM. for those whom, having here regarded, they
 IX. shall perceive are consigned to a different
 doom. The pious, indeed, are not used to
 be intimately connected with those whom
 they know to be ungodly, the number of
 such cases will, therefore, be by this mean
 reduced; and where they have unwittingly
 contracted a personal affection for them, the
 vileness then manifested in the condemned,
 will in the spirits of just men made per-
 fect, raise an abhorrence of their characters,
 which will at once extinguish all affection,
 and make them acquiesce, without reluc-
 tance, in the justice of their sentence.

Should it farther suggest itself to you,
 that in a disclosure of conduct so general,
 even of the best men many things must be
 revealed of which they will then be
 ashamed, and hence your hopes of unmixed
 happiness be lessened. Attend to the parti-
 cular language of the text; “ And another
 book was opened, which is the book of
 life.” As if it had been said, the secret
 deeds of the wicked, indeed, shall be brought
 to

to light, to prove the justice of their con-
demnation, but the naming of the good, as
the chosen of God, will be a sufficient
testimony of their worth, while their trans-
gressions of which they have truly repented,
shall not be called to remembrance, accord-
ing to the word of the Lord by the prophet
Ezekiel, “ If the wicked turn from his
sin, and do that which is lawful and right;
if the wicked restore the pledge, give again
that he hath robbed, walking in the statutes
of life without committing iniquity, he
shall surely live, he shall not die. None of
his sins that he hath committed shall be
mentioned unto him.” Unabashed, there-
fore, by the repetition of transgressions al-
ready blotted out, having washed their robes,
and made them white in the blood of the
Lamb ; with enlightened minds and rectified
attachments will they be prepared to taste,
with unmixed enjoyment, the felicity which
will arise from seeing in the separation that
the great Shepherd of the flock shall then
make, those whose souls were in this life
most congenial with their own, placed with

SERM. themselves on the right hand; and from

IX.

anticipating the bliss of the endless ages of promised happiness, on which they are now about to enter in the company of those with whom they once parted in all the bitterness of grief, but from whom they shall henceforth never be separated. Raise then, as nearly as ye can, your hearts to an idea of this situation, when ye shall stand, expecting from the mouth of Him who died that ye might live, but who liveth for ever and ever, these words, decisive of everlasting felicity, “Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” And consider, whether the hope of partaking in this lot, at the end of our days, be to be relinquished for the sake of any enjoyments we can now have, or through fear of any exertions that may be now necessary—the heart of man, indeed, cannot conceive the good things which God hath prepared them that love him; but consider only the happiness which in this world is provided for the human race, if
fin

sin had not come in and interrupted the en-^{SERM.}
 joyment of it ; reflect with how great sin-^{IX.}
 cerity yourselves and others have exclaimed,
 How happy could we be but for such and
 such circumstances, all of which arise from
 sin in itself, or its consequences ; and ye
 will then so apprehend the peace and joys
 of that state, in which there shall be no
 more curse, no more death, neither sorrow,
 nor crying, nor any more pain, as may
 excite you to set your affections on things
 above, to run so that ye may obtain, and
 now, *indeed* putting away every thing un-
 worthy a candidate for Heaven, gain for
 yourselves, though an humble, yet a most
 joyful confidence, that when the judgement
 shall sit, and the books be opened, ye shall
 receive the command to take possession of
 the inheritance of the sons of God, and to
 enter into life !

SERMON X.

ON THE FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS.

REV. XXI. 1.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

VARIOUS particulars of that glorious SERM.
inheritance, to which all Christians X.
are taught to look as the sure reward of
their faith and obedience, are mentioned in
other parts of the sacred writings; but in
the two concluding chapters of the Revela-
tion vouchsafed to the beloved disciple, and
through him given to the church, they are
all placed in one point of view; and the
recovery of fallen man from transgression,
from the curse and death, and his restora-
tion to those blessings, which were forfeited
by

SERM. by the sin of our first parents, the tree of
 X. life, and the presence of God, are by the
 spirit of prophecy openly declared. And
 thus are these Holy Scriptures, though consisting of so many different portions, written by various persons, in ages and places widely distant, closed in a manner accurately corresponding with their beginning: and the account they give us of God's dealings with the human race, is rendered complete, by being carried on to that time when, through the omnipotence of their Creatour's mercy, they shall be restored to the secure possession of that state of happiness, in which He had placed them, when they were first called into being.

Few persons, I conceive, read with attention the second chapter of Genesis, without regretting the loss of that paradise, which the Lord had planted; or without (on comparing the happy life which the descendants of Adam might there have passed, with their present situation, in the midst of frailty, pain, and sorrow) being,
 led

led to wish for that restoration of all SERM.
things, with an intimation of which the X.
Lord God was pleased to alleviate the sen-
tence He pronounced on His disobedient
creatures. Now the gratification of such a
wish, in its fullest extent, is displayed to
us in the vision of the text; and which I
have chosen for subject of discourse, be-
cause the particulars therein revealed are
calculated, not only to excite in our minds
the most earnest desires to be admitted to a
state so full of glory and happiness, but to
convince us also of the indispensable necessity
of those preparations, which the Gospel, in
almost every page, warns us to make against
the appearance of that kingdom. May I
not therefore hope, that the attention to
this subject will be as general as the interest
we have in it, and earnest in proportion to
the loss with which deficiency on our part
would be attended?

Now, although the representation which
this vision contains of the glories of the
heavenly Jerusalem, (called heavenly, be-
cause

SERM. cause it comes down from Heaven) be

x. evident, for the most part emblematical,
 though they be described under the images
 of those things which at present convey to
 our minds the highest ideas of pure magni-
 ficence, and unclouded splendour; yet
 several of the blessings to be inherited on
 the new earth are literally expressed, while
 even those that are conveyed in figure, are
 not so darkly shaded, but that we may form
 notions of them sufficiently clear and strong,
 to raise in our breasts most anxious desires
 to be thought worthy of admission to them.
 If they are not designed to be contemplated
 by us, What reason can be given for their
 having been revealed? Since these cannot,
 like other parts of the line of prophecy,
 be of service, when they are fulfilled, as
 testimonies of the truth of revelation; be-
 cause when the day of judgement is once
 arrived, no further demonstration will be
 wanting. The end, therefore, of such de-
 lineations of particulars of the future state,
 must be to arrest our attention, and to ren-
 der us desirous of partaking of the good
 things

things thus set before us in similitudes. SERM.

And if so, surely it is not dealing fairly by ourselves, not to make use of the means thus afforded us of engaging our affections on the side of our real interest. We know that the preference men give to the things of this life, arises not from any superiority they are even supposed to possess over those of the next, but merely from their being present: to counteract, then, the effects of a circumstance, which experience shews to be so powerful, we may, by the use of reflection, place the future blessings in a light so strong before our minds, as to make the deepest impressions on them; and if we neglect to use the power we thus possess of fixing our inclinations on things eternal, Who but ourselves will in justice be to blame for all the consequences of our thus acting against the dictates of common sense? Under this consideration let us proceed to a brief review of the particulars mentioned in this most awful and interesting part of revelation.

X.
~~~~~

SERM.      The first more remarkable circumstance  
 X.      that occurs in the apostle's account of the  
 new earth, is, that on it "there will be no  
 sea." A point well worthy of attention,  
 on account of its perfect consistency with  
 that state of happiness we are taught will  
 be there enjoyed. For of that commercial  
 intercourse which is now carried on by  
 means of the great body of waters, and  
 which conveys the products of one country  
 to supply the wants of another, there can  
 be no need in a state in which the infirmi-  
 ties and the necessities of the present shall  
 be no longer known. Neither will other  
 purposes to which the ocean has here con-  
 tributed, by keeping nations separate for  
 ages, exist in a world, where the whole  
 dispensation is complete, and not, as in the  
 present, only in progress to something here-  
 after to be revealed. Severe, and many are  
 the evils caused by the sea; the prospect it  
 yields, however grand and striking on the  
 first view, is, in fact, a barren prospect,  
 and full of melancholy suggestions. If an  
 ocean be subject to storms, it must occasion  
 afflictions;


afflictions ; and could we suppose it always SERM.  
free from them, it must produce exhalations the most noxious and disgusting. X. So  
that in every view taken of it by man, (and, let it be remembered, it is to man that the prospect of happiness in another world is intended to be given in the Gospel) the sea is a part of the globe he lives on, incompatible with the perfect happiness of its inhabitants, and which, consequently, it might justly be expected, would no longer exist where such happiness is to enjoyed : in exact conformity to which expectation, excited by reasoning on the very nature of things, St. John declares, that on the new earth he saw “ there was no sea.”

In the state from which will thus be banished, what is a source of so many and severe sufferings in the present, “ There shall (it was farther revealed to the apostle) be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain.” And thus will the sons of Adam be freed from all the afflictions under which they at present

SERM. present groan ; with this peculiarity in their  
 X. state of relief, that there will be room to  
 dread any alteration of it. Here the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of its season, render even in the youngest the entertainment of sanguine hopes of any distant enjoyment, a subject of reproof, an object of ridicule ; but there ye may plan future schemes of happiness without danger of disappointment, and engage in the longest pursuits without hazard of interruption. Doubt will then give way to security, and hope be changed into possession. The sigh of mourning, the lamentation of disappointment, the complaint of oppression, and the shriek of terror, will then no more be heard ; because “ the former things are passed away :” but safety unmenaced, joy unalloyed, happiness unmixed, will be to those who are deemed worthy of an entrance into that state, because “ the Lord God hath made all things new.”

But the particular more circumstantially noticed in this portion of the vision, is  
 “ the



“ the great city, the Holy Jerusalem,” de- SERM.  
scribed as composed of materials which X.  
plainly allude to those characters of which   
its citizens will consist. The Lord had  
promised, by the prophet Zechariah, to try  
the remnant of Israel as the gold is tried;  
and thus St. John declares, that the city was  
of pure gold. By the mouth of the pro-  
phet Malachi it was said likewise, that  
those who feared the Lord, and thought  
upon His name, should be His in the day  
when He made up His jewels: to this  
allusion how strongly answers the figurative  
description of the heavenly Jerusalem: the  
building of the wall is of jasper, its foun-  
dations are garnished with all manner of  
precious stones, and the twelve gates are  
twelve pearls. In consistency with other  
scriptures on the foundations, are inscribed  
the names of the twelve apostles; and as  
entrance into this holy city is accorded only  
to those who are engrafted into the stock of  
Israel, on the twelve gates are the names of  
the twelve tribes of the chosen people.  
While the number of its square measure


VOL. III. O exactly

SERM. exactly answers to the number of that glorious company, which are declared to be the “ first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” In the midst of this community are found the trees of life, and the river of life: and to complete the glory of the scene, the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and “ His servants shall see His face.”

Now what a subject for reflection, what an object of earnest desire, is here presented to our minds, in the happiness to be enjoyed in a world from which every natural inconvenience, every moral evil, will be everlastingly banished; and the citizens of whose capital will be specifically the congregation of the very best men that have passed through this life, purified even from the few imperfections they betrayed under the severest trials of the present world; and placed by the unerring sentence of the Judge of all the earth, in their proper station, at the head of human kind! For into this city, it is declared, “ they shall bring the glory

glory and the honour of the nations.” And, SERM.  
indeed, to dwell round the throne of the X.  
Almighty, and be appointed to reside under  
the immediate glory of His visible presence,  
is a distinction, which raises a creature to  
a degree of exaltation, which not the gene-  
rality of sons of Adam alone, but, perhaps,  
still superiour beings, may look up to,  
while themselves move only in a lower  
sphere. But “ Will God, indeed, dwell  
with men?” and Can an inheritance like  
this be reserved for such unprofitable ser-  
vants? These are questions of wonder  
which, while they naturally arise from re-  
flecting on the immeasurable distance be-  
tween our heavenly Father and ourselves,  
lead also to the consideration of the indis-  
pensable necessity there is for those prepa-  
rations which the Gospel so earnestly and  
so repeatedly warns us to make against the  
appearance of the kingdom of Heaven.  
For if the good things which revelation  
thus declares, God hath prepared for those  
who love Him, be so excellent, that it is  
absolutely an exercise of our faith to per-

SERM. suade ourselves of the possibility of the gift ;

x.  how much less can we believe, that any share in them will be granted to those, who refuse to comply with the conditions on which they are offered ; or neglect to obtain the qualifications, which are declared requisite in every one, who shall partake of them? If ye are astonished, that God should in any wise condescend to dwell with men ; ye cannot be surprized that He should require those of them, among whom He will vouchsafe to dwell, to purify themselves as He is pure. The very fact of God's purposing to exalt all the followers of Christ to such glory, accounts at once for the charge given to all who name the name of Christ to depart from evil ; and proves, that by the strictness of the Gospel precepts, it is not merely the exercise of our faith, or the trial of obedience, that is intended ; but the rendering us such characters, as are requisite to fill that high station, to which the goodness of God, through Christ, will promote those among us, who choose to qualify themselves for it.

Hence-

Henceforth then, when ye find yourselves SERM.  
inclined to complain of the purity which X.  
the Gospel requires in its disciples, take  
into the account the holiness of that com-  
munity, of which these disciples are ad-  
mitted probationary members; and ask your-  
selves, whether any characters short of those  
which we are required to become, would  
be fit to be exalted to a station so dignified,  
so glorious, as that declared to be reserved  
for the real followers of Christ. When ye  
would soothe yourselves under the remem-  
brance of your transgressions, and proceed-  
ing in all the cant of the reprobate, ye  
argue, that surely the divine mercy will  
never require this commission, and that  
neglect, at the hands of so frail a creature  
as man; recollect, that the determinate  
connection between righteousness and hap-  
piness is already established by the nature  
God was pleased to give to things, when  
in the beginning He created them. Con-  
sistently with which we find our blessed  
Lord mentioning the kingdom to be inhe-  
rited by those of whom He shall approve,

SERM. as prepared for them from the beginning of  
 X. the world. Proceeding then on these facts ;  
 ~~~~~ that without holiness, no man shall see the  
 Lord ; and that this holiness is a real
 character, to which alone are adjusted the
 glories and the enjoyments, the honour and
 the happiness of the future state : consider
 the absolute necessity of acquiring this holi-
 ness, if ye wish to be successful candidates
 for a portion among the sons of God. Or
 should ye imagine, that a less perfect righte-
 ousness might save you from condemnation ;
 and provided that point be secured, be con-
 tent to give up the highest glory to which
 ye are called ; (for to what will not the
 meanness of vice submit) recollect, that the
 composition ye wish for is not to be made ;
 for it is declared, that those very characters
 who, on account of the defilement they
 have contracted, shall not enter into the
 holy city, shall moreover have their part in
 the lake which burneth with fire and brim-
 stone. And need ye be told the reason of
 the condemnation of such characters ? Or
 is it not manifest to any one, who will be

at the pains of thinking at all seriously on this SERM.
most important of all subjects, that as they X.
who have not obtained habits of purity,
charity, and piety, would both be uneasy in
themselves, if placed in a society so holy,
and also offend others by the irregularity of
their behaviour, thus interrupting the pro-
mised tranquility of that happy state; so
men, who have rejected the mercy of God,
despised His promises, and thought scorn
of that heavenly country, are presumptuous
transgressors, the guilt of whose disobe-
dience being estimated by their obligations
to attention, is sufficiently great to merit all
the punishments with which these scrip-
tures threaten the impenitent?

From this untoward generation, there-
fore, it is yours to save yourselves. The
question which was put to the children of
Israel, in the name of the Lord, may with
justice be put to the church of the Gentiles
likewise; “What could have been done
more to my vineyard, that I have not done
in it?” On the first preaching of christi-
anity,

SERM. anity, a doctor of the Jews, celebrated for
 X. his learning, his abilities, and his character,
 not yet convinced of the truth of the Gospel, stated what he considered as a decisive test of its coming from Heaven. “ If this counsel, or this work, be of men, (said he) it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.” And this test was so far assented to by its most bitter enemies, who had opportunity of examining on the spot the pretensions and the works of its preachers, who were well versed in the doctrines on which it was founded, and in possession of the Scriptures on which it claimed, that they for a season withheld their hands, then stretched out in persecution of its professors, but finding that it stood the test proposed, and that instead of decreasing in its influence, it wonderfully grew and prospered; they renewed their cruel efforts to extinguish it, but though still more potent enemies joined in the attempt, after a period of upwards of 1700 years, here are we inhabitants of a far distant region of the earth, assembled in

acknowledgement of the divine origin of SERM.
that Gospel, which (Gamaliel well argued) X.
would, had it not been of God, have come
to nought.

In addition too to this constant call made on us to be mindful of the reality of that system of divine government under which we live, from the hour of its being first preached to the present instant, the situation of the professors of the Gospel have been accurately such as was pre-signified by the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Himself—the sins of christendom have, in fact, been visited, and the corruptions of christianity avenged, until, in the present age, the want of consideration of the judgements of God, and indifference to His approbation or His wrath, being become almost as great and as general as they can be, His afflictions begin to assume an appearance more terrific than has yet been seen. Instances of nations apostatizing from christianity, instances of their most grossly corrupting its doctrines and perverting its precepts,
and

SERM. and of the divine judgements falling on
X. them for these things, and of their conse-
quently sinking from a high state of civilization into the lowest barbarism, ye may perhaps find recorded in history. But that of a very numerous nation, among whom learning had long been cultivated, the arts and sciences had long flourished, and which had, as it were, fascinated all its neighbours into a servile imitation of its follies and vices, formally renouncing the Gospel, abolishing, by order of a government in which they all affected to participate, the observation of the Lord's day, and shutting up their churches; and moreover, deliberately forming plans for continuing infidelity and vice to succeeding generations among themselves, and propagating them in surrounding nations, and from the most polished, becoming, in an instant, as it were, the most savage people on the earth: while the inhabitants of the adjoining lands (not even excepting our own) appear to be much less averse to their principles than fearful of their arms, is a novel occurrence
unparalleled

unparalleled in the annals of mankind, yet forming an actual commencement, and indicating the future growth of such a darkness as it is written, shall in the last days cover the people; when, instead of making the proper use of their sufferings, and repenting of their deeds, they shall only blaspheme the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores: and thus manifest to us, that we are not indeed far removed from the last link in that chain of events which the scriptures have described to us, as extending from the time of our blessed Saviour's ascension to Heaven, to that of His coming again. Is this a time, then, to be thoughtless of our salvation, when the day, that must bring forth the sentence of it, is so plainly near at hand? Or, is the hope of the scene of happiness I have this day set before you from the Scriptures, not worth cherishing? For if it be deserving of any attention, it must be so of the highest.

In

SERM. In the name of God, therefore, of that
X. God who offers you such inexpressible mercies, let me beseech you to make a real and effectual use of the light of His revelation while ye yet have it; it may in wrath, it will in judgement, be taken from those who refuse to walk by it. That this has before been done, ye see in the fate of His ancient people the Jews; ye see it in what has befallen many who once called themselves Christians. And should ye, by your wilful deafness to this and every call, bring down the same sentence on yourselves, What, can ye conceive, will be the regret, the horror, the anguish of your souls, when waking in another life, and seeing the promised glories of the sons of God revealed, ye are told that your portion lies another way! Ponder well this question: and recollecting that the kingdom of Heaven consisteth not in *words*, any more than in *meat* or *drink*, strive to obtain an inheritance therein, by both holding fast the faith, and practising the works of a Christian; referring constantly to the Testament of your
Lord,

Lord, that ye may know what is truly the SERM.
work He hath left you to do; and fre- X.
quently reviewing His promises, that ye
may rise superiour to every difficulty, and
be carried triumphantly through every trial,
by the blessed hope of being, in the end,
admitted “ to the city of the living God,
the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumer-
able company of angels, to the general
assembly and church of the first born, which
are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge
of all, and to the spirits of just men made
perfect, and to Jesus the Mediatour of the
new covenant.” To Whom with Him that
sitteth upon the throne, be ascribed, as is
most due, salvation and blessing, and glory,
and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour,
and power, and might; for ever and ever!


SERMON XI.

ON THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF THE
WICKED.

ST. MATT. xxv. 46.

*And these shall go away into everlasting
Punishment.*

THE particular earnestness with which SERM.
our blessed Lord warned men of the XI.
fearful doom awaiting the wicked, accurately corresponds with the character of Him, who came to be, through his own sufferings, the Saviour of all, who are willing to be saved from such condemnation. In a discourse recorded in the latter part of the ninth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, he repeated no less than three
several

SERM. several times the images under which he
XI. was wont to describe the torments of the
 cursed. But this earnestness does, on the
other hand, as little accord with the imagination that the menaces of a fire which
never goeth out, and a worm which never
dieth, are, in great part, but empty threats:
a presumptuous and silly conceit, which
some corrupters of the Gospel strongly support, while others, who unfeignedly loath
any participation in their guilt, take it up
under a mistaken notion of its tending to
manifest the glory of God and of Christ.

Great as are the punishments threatened
to the wicked, it is plain the prospect of
them does not intimidate men from the
practice of sin; and the menaces, consequently,
are not greater than are absolutely
requisite to deter men from the breach of the
divine laws. But if human perverseness
be such, as to demand menaces of punishments
so severe, should those menaces be
despised, will justice require any thing less
than the absolute infliction of the penalty
threat-

threatened? In support of the negative of SERM.
this question it has been argued, that the XI.
sanctions of the divine law, it must be pre-
sumed, will be perfect; but as that to
which any thing can be added is not so, it
necessarily follows, that the penalties on the
breach of that law must be everlasting.

In reply to all these reasonings, not only the mercy of God is pleaded, but it is even pretended, that such retribution would be matter of injustice; and thus is the dread of future punishment lessened, and sanctions, which already prove in many cases of no avail, reduced to be ineffectual in still more. To prevent ourselves from being misled, nay, cheated of our salvation, by the shallow but presumptuous blessings of either those who wilfully oppose the truth, or others who are deceived by the plausible cloak of tenderness for the infirmities, and pity for the sufferings of men; let us now examine the arguments of those who would persuade us that the punishment of sinners will not be everlasting; and then proceed

SERM. to consider the miseries of that lot, which
 XI. reason suggests, and scripture declares, will
 be their portion in another state.

The first topick from which these reasoners argue, is the divine mercy, with which they say, it is inconsistent to have created beings who would make themselves everlastingly miserable. But surely, when contemplating the perfections of our Creator, we are bound to enquire with caution, and pronounce with humility. Whatever may be our future lot, that it was not inconsistent with His goodness to make us subject unto it, is manifest from our existence itself; and how far His mercy will extend to affect that lot, He certainly must best know. If we have, then, a revelation of His will concerning it, the words of that must be decisive; and it is absurd to look out for any other ground on which to form our expectations concerning it. Since if we discover something that may encourage us to draw a conclusion different from what is revealed, and lead us to imagine
 that

that we thereby exalt the mercy of our SERM.
God; we shall still be doing this at the XI.
expend of His truth. If God hath de-
clared in His Gospel, that the wicked shall
go into everlasting punishment, all our spe-
culations on His mercy will prove nothing
but our dread of such a doom, as long as
His truth must stand unimpeached.

In the same manner may be answered the
arguments which the same reasoners draw
from the perfection of the satisfaction made
by the sufferings of Christ. That will,
doubtless, reach to all for whom He will
intercede: and therefore, in part perhaps,
is all judgement committed unto Him; that
He may exercise the most uncontrouled
power of salvation. Still hath He declared
by His apostle, that He gave Himself for
us, that He might purify unto Himself a
peculiar people: still has He taught in His
own person, that strait is the gate, and
narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life,
and few there be that find it; and still has
He commanded His disciples to go, and
preach

SERM. preach to all nations, that he that believes,
 XI. and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that
 believeth not, shall be damned. And still
 has He affirmed, that He will, in the last
 day, say unto those on His left hand,
 “ Depart *from me*, ye cursed, into everlasting
 fire, prepared for the devil and his
 angels.”

To avoid the force of this last text, and others of like meaning, we are sometimes boldly assured, that the word rendered everlasting, should not be so understood. Yet is the same term used to express the never-failing existence of God Himself, as in the sixteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, “ according to the commandment of the everlasting God.” And this very evasion seems to be guarded against in the Scriptures, not only by the circumlocutions employed on this head, when the place of torment is described, as that where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched : but by its having been specifically declared, that the bodies of the dead
 shall

shall be raised incorruptible; and each of SERM.
the future states shall be unchangeable. In XI.
the former of these points, we are instructed
by St. Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of his
first epistle to the Corinthians; and the last
our Lord hath taught us in the parable of
the rich man and Lazarus. Now surely,
if the subjects of punishment be to exist for
ever, and yet, when once placed in the tor-
ments to which they are condemned, never
change their state, it must be something
more than folly to deny, that their punish-
ment shall be everlasting.

But by others it is affirmed, that such a
dispensation would be unjust, and therefore
we must be mistaken in our deductions
from Scripture; and that, because there is
no proportion between temporal offences
and eternal punishment. Now this obser-
vation would be just, if the guilt of an
offence were always in proportion to the
time employed in the commission of it;
but far from this, a trifling imposition may
require many days for the accomplishment

SERM. of it; while the horrid crime of murder
 XI. may be committed in a moment. Duely
 ~~~~~ to estimate the criminality of a transgression, the obligation we are under to obey the law transgressed, must be taken into consideration: and our obligations to comply with the divine commandments are infinite; the guilt contracted by the breach of them must therefore be the same; and, consequently, if justice require (as these reasoners themselves contend it does) that the punishment be in proportion to the crime, the punishment attached to transgressions against God must be infinite. Neither should it be suffered to pass unobserved, that the sins of the impenitent do, in fact, continue as long as they are capable of transgressing; and would (since we may be certain the divine mercy denies to no man, who would make use of it, opportunity for repentance) proceed infinitely, were they not stopped by the intervention of death. So that although their actual crimes may be numbered, the wickedness of their hearts seems past all estimate:


and that the punishment of such souls should be the same, cannot be matter of injustice.

SERM.

XI.



To return then to the declarations of scripture as unaffected by exceptions so vain; the duration of the punishment of sinners is expressed in the very same terms as that of the happiness of the righteous: and the variation of phrase introduced by our translators in the last verse of the chapter of the text, “and these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal,” is totally unwarranted by the original. If the sufferings of the former, therefore, are to be but temporary, neither are the joys of the latter; and thus is the glory of the Christian dispensation eclipsed, the endless ages of happiness procured, by the blood of Christ, for those whom He hath redeemed out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, reduced to a limited period of enjoyment, by the fantastical speculations of vain men; who, though they may not see this consequence

SERM. of the tenet they have embraced, could,  
 XI.  one should think, if they first investigated it as they ought to do, scarcely fail of perceiving, that by asserting a temporary punishment for sinners, they are introducing again one of the mischievous errors of the church of Rome, the long-exploded doctrine of purgatory.

Having thus cleared our way through the difficulties started against the doctrine of the text, by the fears rather than the reason of men, it remains to consider the miseries which, in another state, await those who will not use the opportunity for repentance which this affords.


That which is so commonly said of the terrors which great sinners sometimes manifest on their death-beds, that they already suffer the torments of the damned, may well suggest to us the first portion of those miseries, into which the impenitent must hereafter sink. For as their last sufferings here proceed from dread of the punishment




punishment justly due to their crimes, and SERM.  
from remorse at having wasted their time XI.  
and their faculties on things which profit  
not, we may most reasonably conclude, that  
the same fears, and the same self-reproach,  
will keep possession of their souls when  
separate from their bodies. And when  
these are increased by the reflection, that  
the day of salvation is entirely past, and  
when no external objects remain to divert  
the thoughts, or relieve the attention, even  
for a moment, from the tremendous pro-  
spect, their sufferings, even during this  
period of them, will be such, as to make  
them think, whatever they have gained in  
this world by their transgressions, much too  
dearly purchased.

But when the hour of sentence arrives,  
what was before only the effect of fear,  
must be advanced into the result of cer-  
tainty; and the being marked by the de-  
cree of that Judge who cannot err, with  
the character of one fit to consort only with  
the devil and his angels, will naturally oc-  
casion

SERM. cation a degree of mortification, give rise  
 XI. to such an height of terrour, as no words  
 can exprefs, no imagination at present reach. Neither will this mortification be tranſient, or theſe terrours vain, ſince the former will be rendered permanent, and the latter realized, by an everlaſting ſeparation from the congregation of the righteous, and perpetual baniſhment from the preſence of God. And now, for the purpoſe of exciting yourſelves to every poſſible exertion for avoiding ſuch a doom, conceive, as far as ye can, what would be the feelings of your ſouls under it. Having, from the ſentence of approbation with which they were honoured in your preſence, caught a glimpſe of the glory which the righteous inherit, What would be your regret on reflecting, that you had preſumptuouſly deſpiſed the offer, madly neglected the opportunity of obtaining the ſame ! In alleviation of the mortification of diſappointment, and the pains of grief, we here often ſucceſſfully recur to ſcenes of feſtivity, or the converſation of thoſe who are at eaſe ; and great is the relief

lief we thus obtain. But when all around SERM.  
us are as wretched as ourselves, and the XI.  
whole region to which we are banished,   
resounds with the cries of lamentation, and  
the groans of despair, no intermission of  
forrow, no cessation of misery, will be  
within our reach. The methods which we  
here have taken to stifle the rebukes of  
conscience, and render ourselves insensible  
to the voice of truth, will then appear the  
most cruel deceptions; and our sufferings,  
instead of being diminished by communica-  
tion with those who could pity and relieve,  
must be rather encreased by being imparted  
to the wicked in despair: while the hour of  
repentance, which here rather soothes the  
soul of the sinner who is brought to a  
sense of his offences, being past, for con-  
trition, obduracy alone remains; and that  
love of God, which in its perfection casteth  
out fear, being entirely extinguished, to it  
must succeed unchangeable hatred, accom-  
panied with the most tormenting terrors.

But

SERM. But in reflecting only that we could draw  
XI.  no consolation from the company in which we should then be placed, we have by no means considered all the evils we should suffer from them. Would the malice of the wicked, think ye, be lessened, by their being rendered desperate? Will the mockeries of the cruel, the taunts of the insolent, the spite of the revengeful, be restrained by knowing that their final doom is past? Or rather, Will not all who are condemned to depart from the throne as cursed, become objects of mutual persecution to each other, and hell thus be made, even were no external torments added, a scene of ceaseless distress, of inexpressible misery?

If men could but be persuaded to apply their thoughts seriously to what must, in the natural course of things, be the sufferings of the impenitent in another world, where, even for the sake of the good, they will be entirely separated from them, and where it would be absurd to suppose, they will

will be placed in a place purposely pre- SERM.  
pared to afford ease to their restless spirits, XI.  
they could not but descry such a portion of  
misery awaiting obstinate transgressors, in  
merely being exposed and confined without  
relief to the company of the damned, as  
must make an impression on their minds,  
and convince them, that without adverting  
to the positive penalties denounced by reve-  
lation, the future sufferings of those who  
continue in iniquity, will infinitely surpass  
all the pleasure they can here gain through  
the indulgences of sin.

But how then will stand the account,  
when the positive punishments with which  
the Gospel menaces the impenitent, be  
taken into it? These are, the fire which  
never goeth out, and the worm which  
never dieth; and the effects of these on the  
sufferers are described by weeping, and  
gnashing of teeth: expressions which con-  
vey to us images of the severest torments  
both of body and mind. While those who  
conceive, they gain an argument against  
the

SERM. the probability of these, from the presumed

XI. impossibility of a material fire, seem to forget, that the wicked, as well as the righteous, shall rise again, with their bodies, to judgement. And after all, however men may amuse themselves with reasoning on the particulars of the future punishment, the power of God will infallibly furnish means to fulfil all that His justice has threatened. As in contemplating, therefore, the everlasting happiness of the good, there appeared no danger of our conceiving too highly of the blessings they will enjoy, so may we be assured, that the fears of the sinner, which prove ineffectual to produce repentance, will never surpass those real sufferings, which he is heaping up for himself against the day of the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.

We may, then, for the purpose of raising in our breasts such an horror of the penalties of sin, as may deter us from yielding to the temptations of it, without either presumption, or peril of encreasing our apprehensions

hensions beyond the reality of the inflictions, picture to ourselves a vast abyfs, whose utter darkness will be interrupted, not relieved, by the blue glare of fulphurous flames; whose unmeasured concave will resound with ceaseless cries of misery; cries not of a nature to excite compassion, but to raise horror. Wherein, if an hapless wretch would remove from place to place, in hopes of finding some ease, instead of meeting, as in the regions of the blessed, smiles of benevolence, and countenances of joy, he will encounter only the scowl of malice, and the grin of despair. Where, instead of the affectionate congratulations of those with whom he past in Christian love through this life, he will, on meeting his former associates in vice, hear only bitter reproaches for the share he had in bringing them to that place of torment. For subjects of meditation he can have only the perverseness which brought him into that scene of misery, and the scene itself; where the lamentations of the sufferers, without alleviating their own, will

SERM.  
XI.

con-


SERM. contribute to encrease each other's wretchedness; and where, while those who have  
XI. obtained a contrary lot, receive in the presence of God fulness of joy, they, banished from the light of His countenance, are doomed to dwell with the devil and his angels for ever and ever.

In this course of this address to you, I have repeatedly stated, that the end of calling your attention to these terrours of the Lord, is no other than that of persuading you, if possible, to make timely and effectual exertions for avoiding them. These exertions will necessarily be damped by listening to those vain babblings which would lead you to hope, that they may, in the event, prove less than the Gospel has declared they shall be. The shallowness of such reasonings, therefore, I have endeavoured to expose: and although it be manifest as light itself, that under a wise and just Governour, the disobedient cannot finally be gainers by their transgressions; yet, as multitudes of the sons of Adam are  
simple



simple enough to overlook this plain truth in their practice, I have reminded you of the declarations of Scripture as to the greatness of the punishments appointed for the impenitent; that by comparing these with whatever enjoyments, ye may imagine, that ye can in this world gain by sin, ye may see how directly contrary to your own everlasting interest ye act, by refusing the narrow path that leadeth to life, and preferring the broad way that endeth in destruction. As, therefore, ye would wish, when all the good ye can obtain in this world shall be at an end, not to be deprived of all prospect of further happiness, not to be cast into outer darkness, there to abide with the devil and his angels in everlasting burnings, surrounded with the cursed, expressing the torments they endure by ceaseless weeping and gnashing of teeth, wisely make an effectual use of what is revealed of these things, and without waiting until one be sent from the dead to testify of their reality, listen, ere your ears are closed by death, to Moses and the prophets, to the Lord Jesus and His

VOL. III. Q apostles,

SERM. apostles, calling you to repentance; and  
XI. warning you throughout the sacred volume,  
 that there is none other way under Heaven,  
by which men may avoid the plagues, that  
are written in that book.

## SERMON XII.

ON THE TENDENCY AND USE OF TEMPORAL  
AFFLICTIONS.

---

PSALM CXIX. 75.

*I know, O Lord, that thy judgements are  
right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast  
afflicted me.*

AS it is the great end of wisdom to teach SERM.  
us the true road to happiness, one XII.  
immediate object of its precepts is to in-  
struct us how we may either lessen, or en-  
tirely extricate ourselves from the evils  
which so often attack men in this life: and  
therefore those in every age who have been  
esteemed teachers of wisdom, have deli-  
vered lessons on this head: how far the

SERM. Gentile philosophers have succeeded in those  
XII. which they have left us, let any who have  
received benefit from them declare ; but to  
tell a man under affliction that there is little  
or no evil in the distress he feels is to con-  
tradict his senses, while small seems the  
comfort that can be derived from knowing  
that others suffer as much as we do, or  
that our own sufferings might be greater :  
and when the strongest efforts of human  
wisdom produce little better consolations  
than these, intermingled with exhortations  
to bear our miseries like men, because others  
have done so, and because though we can-  
not free ourselves from them, they will  
sometime or other have an end, the need  
we have of some higher instructor, who  
can supply our fainting souls with food  
more solid, becomes too manifest to be  
doubted. But where shall we find such a  
master ? The earth, we see, produces none  
such : it is from Heaven alone that we  
must look for a physician of our souls.

It is religion, and religion alone, that SERM.  
can inform us how to avoid some of the XII.  
evils that are so prevalent in the world, how  
to rescue ourselves from others if seized by  
them, and even, how under those that are  
inevitable, to be always rejoicing; and this  
she can do, by instructing us in the several  
great truths respecting the providence and  
attributes of God: for if His providence  
be universal, if His mercy be over all His  
works, if nothing unknown to Him can  
come to pass, and nothing can be done in  
opposition to His power; then may we be  
assured, that He knoweth our sufferings;  
and that the permitting us to continue un-  
der them, is consistent with His invariable  
goodness: and we may estimate the evils  
which have befallen us as His judgements,  
which are always right; and be confident,  
that in very faithfulness He hath caused us  
to be afflicted. “ But how is this (per-  
haps ye would now ask) your mode of  
blunting the stings of affliction, telling us  
we deserve our sufferings? Would you  
heal our infirmities by wounding our spi-


SERM. rits? Do you strive to lessen our griefs by  
 XII. telling us, the hand of God is upon us?  
 Or, if these things are to be esteemed His  
 judgements, are we to think that all who  
 are in adversity, have brought themselves to  
 it by their sins; and that all the unfortunate  
 are wicked also?" To these questions I  
 will endeavour to reply in their order.

I can then but think, that they reason weakly, and conceive unworthily of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, who would persuade us, that particular evils are absolutely necessary to the good of the whole, and the sufferings of individuals to the general happiness. Such reasoners appear to me to resemble Job's friends, in presumptuously taking up a cause, with the circumstances of which they are little acquainted, and speaking deceitfully for God. It is true that His providence is perpetually employed in bringing good out of evil, and in remedying those mischiefs which arise from the folly and wickedness of His creatures; But are we therefore to conclude,  
 that

that He originally so formed the world, as SERM.  
XII.  
to render a partial deformity necessary to the beauty of the whole, and make it impossible that some of its inhabitants should be happy, but at the expence of others? Is his power of communicating happiness so limited, that He can dispense a certain portion only among His creatures? And are the treasures of His goodness so small, that if He would enrich one, He must impoverish another? Let us not entertain imaginations so dishonourable to the great Creator of the universe, or ascribe to Him a conduct which has so much the appearance of injustice, as the condemning of beings without any demerits of their own to a course of sufferings, merely that they may be subservient to the happiness of others. Let us rather (however mysterious some of the measures of Providence may be, for mysterious many of them must be to creatures short-sighted as we are) rest assured, that whatever any one of us undergoes, tends materially to our own correction or improvement, although it be possible, that

SERM. others may also, at the same time, be  
 XII. benefited by it: and let us learn to contem-  
 plate the providence of God, in that just, though wonderful light, that while it regulates and governs the universe at large, it descends so far to the private concerns of the meanest individual, that even the hairs of our heads are all numbered; and consider His wisdom and power to be such, that even the variety and complication of men's temporal interests can raise no impediment to His dealing by every one of us with the most exact justice, and abundant mercy. This will be thinking of the Lord our God as we ought to think; it will be holding with the well-instructed and truly religious in all ages: and if we thus entertain the same sentiment with them, we shall experience the same consolation from it which they received. For suppose ye that when the psalmist was able to make the reflection contained in the text, his anguish was increased by it? No; though on the first attack of adversity, when he saw the storm gathering on all sides, the  
 con-



consciousness of his sins augmented his SERM.  
terrors, and made his sorrow still more XII.  
bitter, so as to force him to exclaim, “ A   
wounded spirit who can bear!” When he  
grew sufficiently collected in mind to con-  
sider the character of the Judge under whose  
sentence he was suffering, and that his  
heavenly Father ever seasoned justice with  
mercy, the horrors of his soul were calmed,  
he viewed his present ills as probable sources  
of the highest good, and acknowledged the  
kindness of God in thus correcting him,  
by saying, “ It is good for me that I have  
been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes.”

And such is the natural and happy consequence of a just idea and firm belief of the universality of the divine providence. For evils, with the source of which we are unacquainted, affect us the more severely, because being at a loss for their origin, we are unable, too, to conjecture when they will end: but when satisfied that they fall to our lot, under the direction of God’s wisdom and mercy, we have this comfort-

SERM. able assurance, that they are intended either  
 XII. for our correction, in which case they will  
 be withdrawn, whenever that is brought  
 about, an event that we have it in our own  
 power to accelerate, by amending what, on  
 an examination of our conduct, we find  
 amiss therein, or for our improvement by  
 trial, that we may attain an everlasting in-  
 heritance among those who are made per-  
 fect through sufferings ; and therefore from  
 whichever cause they proceed, it is ours to  
 search the matter to the bottom, convinced  
 that we are neither unreasonably nor un-  
 justly subjected to affliction : while by the  
 same mode of reasoning we may preserve  
 ourselves from putting any uncharitable in-  
 terpretations on the cases of others, and  
 from conceiving that they are worse than  
 other men whose misfortunes are more  
 severe ; since “ whom the Lord loveth He  
 chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom  
 He receiveth.” Neither, I presume, is there  
 any good reason to think, that a common  
 case, which is related in the Gospel, of the  
 man who was born blind, that the glory  
 of

of God might be shewed forth on him, SERM.  
by our Lord's imparting sight unto him. XII.  
Indeed, if we fairly consider the circum-  
stances of it, he cannot be said to have suf-  
fered any evil, since, having never experi-  
enced the blessings of light, the want of it  
could but little affect him.

Amplly, indeed, doth holy scripture set  
forth to us, through various passages, that  
cultivation with which our merciful Crea-  
tour favours, and by which, but for our  
own stubborn and perverse resistance, He  
would perfect the sons of men. " Foolish  
men (saith the psalmist) are plagued for  
their offence, and because of their wicked-  
ness : " and the prophets frequently repre-  
sent to us, under the image of an husband-  
man's management of his vineyard, or his  
field, God's dispensations for the correction  
of that people, whose history hath been pre-  
served for the instruction of all succeeding  
ages : and our blessed Lord hath likened  
Himself to a vine, and his disciples to the  
branches of it, declaring, that every branch  
which

SERM. which beareth not fruit, His Father will  
XII. take away ; but those which do bear fruit,  
He will purge, that they may bring forth  
more fruit. Hence, then, we may learn to  
put a just construction on whatever temporal evils may befall us ; and as on the one hand, we may be assured, that since God is not unjust, He will not needlessly subject us to misery ; so on the other, we should reflect, that if we want correction, He must cease to be merciful, before He can fail to give it us.

Neither is it enormous wickedness only, or a confirmed habit of vice, that requires the remedy of punishment ; the application of the same medicine on our very first transgressions may, in truth, be an act of mercy, and prevent evil dispositions from taking so deep root in our breasts as to render a long course of sufferings necessary to eradicate them ; nay, further, as a wise physician would ever prefer a preventive to a remedy, it may be fit, that even the innocent should meet with crosses, and such afflictions as  
may


may preclude them from opportunities of SERM.  
falling into bad habits, and from tempta- XII.  
tions to sin; against which, though they  
are not aware of them, their heavenly  
Father thus mercifully guards them. Dan-  
gerous is the security that arises from prof-  
perity; many and rank are the weeds that  
spring from so rich a soil; ought we then  
to complain of the hand that keeps our  
souls from such? or should we not rather  
bless Him, who thus preserves us from  
perils, against which, from our ignorance, we  
cannot even ask for His assistance? “The  
heart is deceitful above all things,” saith  
the prophet; and if this be the case, how  
often may there be lurking in our breasts  
evil principles, which, though we ourselves  
be not conscious of it, require the correc-  
tion of adversity? Even many of those  
things which, were the judgement of the  
world asked, it would determine to be but  
foibles, might prove, if suffered to continue  
in our breast, impediments to our enjoy-  
ment of perfect happiness in whatever state  
we were.

Ye


SERM. Ye see then to how many causes, in  
XII. which we ourselves only are concerned, the  
afflictions we undergo may be ascribed; and how great reason we have, under all our sorrows, to address ourselves to God, in confidence that they are His judgements which are right, and to confess that in faithfulness He hath afflicted us. There are several evils which we see attached to particular courses of vice as their natural punishment; and that all others are sent either for the correction or prevention of sins, or the trial and confirmation of virtue, there is every ground to believe, since the nature and state of man, the attributes of God, and the declarations of Scripture, all tend to justify this belief. And if such be our faith, what should in wisdom be our practice? If we know, that to conquer the stubborn heart, it must be bowed down by sorrows; that correction is necessary to the rooting out of evil dispositions, and that crosses and disappointment are requisite to the destruction of vicious habits, we cannot be insensible that it is highly absurd to enter

on

on such courses from which we cannot re-  
turn but through affliction, and our follow-  
ing which calls for punishment as an effect  
of the very mercy of God. While, on the  
other hand, the same considerations will  
tend to preserve us from despondency under  
sufferings, and to keep alive in us that hope  
and trust, which are the best incitements  
to resolute and effectual exertions. If we  
be convinced, that the ills which overtake  
us are not the decrees of an irresistible fate,  
or the effects of blind chance, but those  
judgements which an all-wise and good  
God inflicts, and adapts to the circumstances  
of our case, this lesson will present itself  
unto us ; that it is ours to forward, as much  
as in us lies, His gracious purposes, and to  
hasten, by every mean in our power, that  
amendment or improvement, towards which  
His dispensations are thus directed, and at  
the same time that we shall receive no small  
satisfaction in the thought, that our Crea-  
tour is working together with us for our  
deliverance from error, and our obtain-  
ment of salvation, we cannot fail to per-  
ceive,


SERM.  
XII.  


SERM. ceive, that if, pursuing a contrary course,

XII. we give no heed to the more early warnings  
 He vouchsafes us, but harden ourselves against his chastisements, and will not see the hand that is stretched out over us, either our afflictions must be increased until we do feel, or a sentence of final condemnation be pronounced against us, as desperate and incorrigible finners.

Thus doth our all-perfect Governour and Judge set life and death before us, not only repeatedly calling on us to make, but, if we be going wrong, admonishing us to correct our choice; every rejection of such warning will naturally and justly render our return to the right way more difficult, though we may not be totally deprived of the power of undertaking it until life itself closes: then, indeed, the time of probation being past, when the sinner finds the folly of his choice, and looks back on the opportunities he hath missed, the warnings he hath rejected, and the mercies he hath despised, his shame, remorse, and anguish,  
 must



must be what no powers of language can SERM.  
express. Imagine a soul freed from the XII.  
deceptions by which the world blinds us,   
sensible that all the good it can receive  
during the whole of its existence, is already  
past, conscious of the happiness of that state  
from which its own perverseness alone hath  
excluded it, and feeling the misery to  
which, by the just sentence of God, it is  
for ever condemned; and when ye have  
considered the bitter agonies such a soul  
must endure, reflect, that if ye begin not  
to-day, while it is called to-day, to work  
out your salvation, these agonies must be  
your own, since the night cometh, when no  
man can work.

On the other hand, to encourage us stea-  
dily to go through the labour of recovering  
that ground which we may have lost in the  
race that is set before us, let us further  
think on the bliss enjoyed by those who,  
through the assistance afforded them by their  
almighty Patron, have come off conquerors  
in their spiritual warfare; what ecstasy

SERM. must such feel, when in the presence of  
XII. Him who hath redeemed them out of every  
kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, they reflect on the dangers from which they have been delivered; and comparing the miseries they have escaped with the happiness they now taste, with hearts overflowing with gratitude, cast the crowns of glory which they have received before the throne, and with ceaseless alleluias ascribe unto Him who sitteth thereon, and unto the Lamb, blessing and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour and power.

# SERMON XIII.

ON THE SPRING.


---

PSALM CIV. 14.

*He causeth the grafs to grow for the cattle,  
and herb for the service of man ; that he  
may bring forth food out of the earth.*

THE psalm whence these words are <sup>SERM.</sup>  
selected, is particularly well known ; <sup>XIII.</sup>  
its being wholly taken up in the mention  
of those works of God which are visible to  
every eye, and the grateful strain which  
pervades it, for the wonders which He hath  
wrought, and the bountiful provision He  
hath prepared for all the creatures which  
exist on earth, and more especially for man,  
into whose hands the rest are given, seem

SERM. to have recommended it to general notice.

XIII. *Who, indeed, can be insensible to the justice*  
 of those praises which the psalmist here offers to his Creatour? or not partake in those sensations which he, with such unaffected earnestness expresses, on contemplating the admirable proofs of divine goodness, wisdom, and power, which every part of the world presents unto us? There is need of neither the acquirements of learning, nor the endowments of philosophy, to render our minds susceptible of such impressions from the various testimonies of the unspeakable glory of the Lord, exhibited to us in the most common operations of His providence, as will excite us to join in lauding and magnifying *His* name, of whose riches the earth is full, and whose mercy is over all his works. Our advancement in knowledge will constantly supply us with additional reason, every new discovery yield further ground for wonder, love and praise; and the more extensive our enquiries are, the more accurate our researches, the richer will become the scene of divine

beneficence displayed to our view. Still SERM.  
even those who, by their situation in life, XIII.  
have been debarred from the more ample  
means of instruction, and whose natural  
faculties have received no further improve-  
ment than what is derived from common  
intercourse with the world, cannot be blind  
to those splendid proofs of their Maker's  
power and munificence that present them-  
selves in the manner in which this globe is  
fitted for the accommodation of the various  
tribes of animals that dwell on it, or deaf  
to the calls for gratitude thence arising on  
themselves.

The benefits accruing to the inhabitants  
of the earth, from the nature and situation  
of the heavenly bodies, from the heat of  
the sun, and from the light and influence  
of the moon, from the clouds raised by the  
former to fall again in fruitful and refresh-  
ing showers, from the tides occasioned by  
the last ; the grateful vicissitude of day and  
night, by which seasons adapted to our  
necessary labours and the rest required,

SERM. alternately succeed each other, the usefulness  
 XIII. of the numberless rivers with which the  
 earth is watered, and of the metals and different substances with which its mountains and its bowels abound ; and various ways in which all the living things we see thereon, contribute to each other's support, are discernible by every eye, and may be comprehended by every understanding : while the blessings which they afford by being general, demand acknowledgement and thanksgiving from every individual. In the attempt, therefore, which I shall now make to call your minds to the consideration of that beauteous portion of the wonderful works of the Lord, which does at this season of the year begin to shine with peculiar lustre, I trust, I shall meet with universal attention.

The vegetable world is now coming into its most florid state : every plant from the towering oak to the humblest herbs, now bursts forth in new luxuriance ; and whether we view them separately or collectively,  
 they

they afford both by their beauty, and the SERM.  
manner in which they administer to the XIII.  
support and comfort of our lives, matter  
of reflection so obvious, and so capable of  
furnishing both pleasure and improvement,  
that to be surrounded with them as we are,  
and receive as we do, hourly satisfaction  
therefrom, yet notice not the sources of it,  
would betray a degree of insensibility dis-  
graceful to any one who claims the name  
of man. Behold the earth clothed with  
verdure, and abundantly pouring forth her  
various productions; see the grass growing  
for the cattle, and herb for the service of  
man: mark the trees of the forest how  
strongly they shoot, and the fruit trees  
putting forth their innumerable blossoms;  
how the meads are bedecked with flowers,  
and the fields stand thick with corn! Then  
consider this great thing; that all these  
plants differing among themselves in num-  
berless degrees with respect to growth, co-  
lour, shape and property, do yet all spring  
from the same ground, are nourished by  
the same showers, and warmed by the same  
sun.

SERM. fun. The slender cypress, and the huge  
XIII: cedar, will flourish in the same plantation;  
the quick-growing lofty elm, and the tardy  
humble yew, grow side by side; and the  
same bed displays the bright yellow of the  
crocus, the deep blue of the violet, the  
lilly's unfulfilled white, and all the tints of  
the gaudy tulip. Are there found, then,  
in the earth, peculiar particles already pre-  
pared and severally adapted to the produc-  
tion of each of these, and are their roots  
so formed as to select those only which be-  
long to their own plant? and does the  
diversity arise from thence? Or, is the  
whole texture of the plant originally con-  
tained in the seed, and gradually unfolding  
and enlarging itself as supplied from the  
soil with food, does it, by a process of na-  
tural chymistry, purify the matter conveyed  
to it by its root, and throwing off all that  
is superfluous and unfit, retain and dispen-  
se to its several parts that alone which is ade-  
quate to give unto each its proper substance,  
size and colour? Now, were the former  
the case, the graff of one kind inserted into  
the



the stock of another, would, if it bore at all, bear the fruit of the stock, in lieu of that of its parent tree; while the structure of plants, and the uses of their several parts, justify the opinion, that the last, though no less miraculous, is the true account of their growth. For that nutriment which the root evidently draws from the earth, must be strained through the greater vessels of the stem, before it can enter the leaves; where again running through those veins which are visible to the naked eye, it is fitted for the channels of the finer shoots, and of those leaves which cover the flower; but it is not until it has been through the flower itself that it becomes of sufficient purity to enter those vessels wherein the seed of the plant is generated. It is, then, by the changes which the sap undergoes in the plant itself, that it is enabled gradually to fill out its various parts, and contribute to the manifestation of its peculiar beauties: and stupendous as is the thought, there must be contained, in the small compass of an acorn, the original texture of the trunk,  
and

SERM.  
XIII.  


SERM. and all the numerous branches into which  
 XIII. the spreading oak gradually expands itself.

Nor will the manner in which the several elements contribute to forward this growth, the assistance it receives from the frequent returns of day and night, and even from the more turbulent agitations of the air, and the care with which the shoot of the following spring is in the bud, defended against the severity of winter, fail to reward our attention to them, by discovering to us such traces of divine wisdom and power, as will raise in our minds affections that will tend to make us both happier and better. And if from the structure and growth of plants in general, we pass on to consider, how calculated the several species are to supply the various wants of the animal world, our admiration and our gratitude will meet with calls equally awakening.

It did not escape the holy psalmist's notice, that the goodness of Providence extendeth even to the fowls of the air, in  
 pro-

providing an habitation meet for them. He SERM.  
speaks of the cedars of Lebanon, which XIII.  
the Lord hath planted, where the birds  
make their nests. As for the stork, says  
he, the fir-trees are her house: And shall  
we overlook the more striking instances of  
the divine bounty? Shall we forget with  
what variety of timber adapted to such dif-  
ferent uses, He furnishes us by the trees of  
the forest; the abundance of herbs and  
fruits, He causeth our gardens to yield;  
the provender He gives us for the support  
of our cattle, or the grain for our own sub-  
sistence? Living in the midst of these, and  
being accustomed to behold their produc-  
tion, we perceive no miracle therein. But  
if reflect on the one hand, how requisite  
they are to our comfort, and even to our  
existence; and on the other, that we brought  
them not into the world with us, but found  
them ready provided for our accommoda-  
tion; and that even towards their encrease  
or continuance, our power goeth not far,  
since one man planteth and another water-  
eth, but God giveth the encrease; we shall  
discern,

SERM. discern, that it is with the fruit of His  
XIII. works that the earth is satisfied ; and if we  
~~~~~ carry our observation a little further, discover that in wisdom He hath ordained them all. For those plants which are the most wanted, and are of the most extensive use, are of the most usual growth, and easiest cultivation ; and the products of each climate are the best suited to the necessities of its inhabitants. For the raising of our corn, we want not the shelter of walls, nor the borrowed warmth of glasses ; the common labour of the husbandman is sufficient : and were less than this required, were men not obliged to labour that they may gain what is necessary to a comfortable subsistence, the idleness reigning among them would soon make the world present one scene of uncurbed licentiousness, even more abominable than that which is exhibited by some of the affluent in the present day. But if not content with the common fruits of their country, men seek to enjoy those which other climates boast ; in the cultivation of these, more labour is required, and  
happily

happily so, since such wishes are not raised SERM.
among the people until they are got into XIII.
that state of society, and their numbers are
so encreased, that many want employment,
and additional occupations are necessary to
furnish business for the additional hands.
And yet further, while to those animals
whose assistance man needeth in his labours,
the wilderness and the desert yield but
scanty provision, to the wilder kinds they,
throughout the year, afford more ample
subsistence. Thus wisely are the products
of the ground apportioned ! Thus all wait
upon the Lord, and He giveth them their
meat in due season : He giveth to the beast
his food, and feedeth the young ravens
which cry ; He giveth them, they gather ;
He openeth His hand, they are filled with
good.

Neither are His gifts confined to what is
necessary ; magnificent in ornament, and
ample are His works, affording many gra-
tifications innocent and elegant : the never-
satiating green which the leaves display,
the

SERM. the various hues which both the blossoms
 XIII. and fruits present to the eye, and the different scents with which the smell is regaled by the plants, afford pleasures which we may enjoy without sin, and in which we may indulge without impurity.

Having thus recommended to your contemplation that scene of divine wisdom, power, and munificence, which does now in particular claim our attention, let me further suggest to you some improvements which the sacred writers notice as naturally arising from a review of these things.

At the close of the hymn whence the text is taken, we find the psalmist expressing, in the following strain, his thankfulness to God, for all the mighty works he had been contemplating: “ I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live ; I will sing praise unto my God while I have my being ; my meditation of Him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord ! ” and concluding
 with

with an exhortation to others to render likewise their praises, " Praise ye the Lord." SERM. XIII.

And verily, such is the call for thanksgiving hereby made on us, that we must be convinced of the most stupid ingratitude, if we fail to render it; since these mercies are not at a distance that we cannot descry them, neither are they trifling, that we may overlook them, but we feel them in our raiment, we taste them in our food, and we meet them in all our ways. Oh, that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! That they would not, with thankless inattention receive, but with grateful hearts *rejoice*, in His bounty; and while they live on His benevolence, accept likewise the instruction He sets before them in His mode of imparting it!

" I went by the field of the slothful," says the wise man, " and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and Lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof:" And
what

SERM. what was the lesson he drew therefrom?

XIII. Even this; “ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” See then Nature so constituted by her great Creatour as to yield her fruit only at Labour’s earnest call; thorns and thistles form the crop of the slothful; but the diligent she plenteously rewardeth. See the well-cultivated field, how it flourisheth, and that he who keepeth his fig-tree, eateth the fruit thereof; and hence learn, that idleness was not made for man, nor shall the sluggard be satisfied with encrease.

Again; “ Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, Shall He not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith!” Such were the words
of

of our blessed Lord to His disciples ; and such is the comfort we are taught to gather when menaced with penury, and fearful of distress, from that scene of divine power and munificence which even this portion of the creation displayeth ! The glories with which the flowers of the field are decked, evidently leave, at an immeasurable distance, all the ornaments which human art can furnish ; it is plain, too, that they are *not of their own* providing, but received from their Creatour's hand : And if His providence so richly extends to creatures thus mean in comparison with man, Shall it not much more extend to man himself ? Or shall aught prevent our partaking of the blessings of His bounty, but our own ill behaviour ? That indeed may, and many and fearful have been the instances of this exhibited in the world. It is not always that the labours of man prosper ; the best course of tillage will not alone ensure a plentiful crop ; favourable seasons are necessary to crown it with success ; and these are withholden when the Lord in His justice

SERM.

XIII.




SERM. sees fit, to make a fruitful land barren, for
 XIII. the wickedness of those that dwell therein.



But there is yet another lesson resulting from the subject before us ; a lesson humiliating indeed, but salutary, and well adapted to correct the fervour with which we embrace the things of this life, and that forgetfulness which we so frequently betray of the uncertainty of our continuance in it. How often does it happen, that the flower whose beauties we admire in the morning, fadeth ere the day closes ! its colours gone, its odours past, it hangs its drooping head, and only testifies, by its sad remains, the rapidity of its decay ; And is the glory of man more durable ? Are not his days as grass ? He flourisheth in the morning, but is fallen off and withered at night : Alas ! some of us may never *reach* the evening of life ! What numbers blasted by chilling winds, or parched by the mid-day's sun, suddenly disappear, and their place knoweth them no more ! And how soon may the most florid among us come into that state,

in

in which it shall justly be pronounced over SERM.
him, “ Man that is born of a woman hath XIII.
but a short time to live, and is full of 
misery : he cometh up, and is cut down
like a flower : he fleeth as it were a shadow,
and never continueth in one stay !”

But, blessed be God ! the parallel endeth not here. Those beauties which every tree, and every herb, now discloseth, have succeeded to the ravage of winter : in the year past they exhibited the like beauties, but gradually decaying as the unfavourable rigour of the season encreased, their vegetative powers became at length dormant and inactive ; inactive, but not destroyed ; concealed, but not lost. Behold them rising from the tomb of winter, and bursting forth with all the vigour of renewed life ! And shall not this bring to our minds the wonderful fact which was by the power of the Lord brought about in the person of our blessed Saviour ? Behold a man seemingly stricken of God, vexed with all His storms, and cut off from the land of the living,

SERM. then laid for a season in the darkness of the
XIII. sepulchre, but quickly breaking from the
bands of death, and so unexpectedly appearing to his followers, that while they yet know Him not, they with sorrowful hearts complain unto Himself, that they had trusted, that it had been He who would have redeemed Israel. Mark the grain, which awhile ago was buried in the earth, now springing up with a new body, and ye will then see the absurdity of starting speculative difficulties against the doctrine of a resurrection, and the folly of putting the questions, How are the dead raised up, or with what body do they come? Behold, to every seed God giveth its own body; and that He will do so likewise to every man, He hath given us assurance, in that He hath raised up Christ as the first fruits from the grave; promising, that to those who have true faith in Him, and who are, indeed, His disciples, the valley of the shadow of death, shall prove a passage to the mount of God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediatour of the new covenant.

SERM.

XIII.


These are the improvements which the contemplation of the beautiful scene the earth now presents, naturally suggests to us ; let not then the season pass without accepting them ; learn to admire and adore the all-glorious perfections of the Creatour ; sleep not over his bounty, but industriously employ the powers, and cultivate the means of happiness He hath given you, firmly trust in his exuberant goodness, dread his power, and stand in awe of His justice : be mindful of the frailty of your own existence ; and remember, that uncertain as it is in its present state, and dark as appears the hour which closes it, the infinite mercy of God does, through the mediation of His Son, now offer you opportunity, an opportunity, if once lost, never to be recovered, of securing to yourselves a better life, and

SERM. exchanging the terrours of death, and the
XIII. night of the grave, for the joys of a tri-
umphant resurrection, and the ever bloom-
ing happiness of His eternal day.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE HARVEST.

GEN. VIII. 22.

While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.

THESE words, in which the sacred SERM.
historian has recorded the divine pur- XIV.
pose never more while this world itself
shall endure, to interrupt the stated succe-
sion of the seasons, and of the alternate
periods for labour and for rest given unto
men, will furnish Christians with an answer
to the question ascribed by St. Peter to the
scoffers of the last days, “ Where is the
promise of His coming? for since the
fathers

SERM. fathers fell asleep, all things continue as
XIV. they were from the beginning of the crea-
tion." For if it has been declared by revelation, that the course of the material world should suffer no considerable interruption, its having yet suffered none such, yields testimony in favour of revelation; and, consequently, of the truth of that promise, which the wicked naturally wish may never be fulfilled, that the Lord will return to render to every man according to his works. Nay, further, since in the following words of scripture, " Thus saith the Lord: If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers," the stability of the former covenant is pointed out as a pledge of that of the other, with the full completion of which, our blessed Saviour's second coming is so necessarily connected, the uninterrupted performance
of

of it forms, under theſe circumſtances, no SERM.
leſs than a perpetual admonition, that He XIV.
whoſe word ſupports the one, will, in His
own good time, fulfil the other alſo.

Of the firſt, as far as it involves in it a
promiſe that the world ſhall never more be
deſtroyed by water, He hath inſtituted a
ſign: “ And God ſaid, This is the token
of the covenant which I make between Me
and you, and every living creature that is
with you, for perpetual generations: I do
ſet my bow in the cloud; and it ſhall
be for a token of a covenant between Me
and the earth.” Hence even among the
Heathen, when they had forgotten the real
occaſion of this token being appointed, the
rainbow was ſtill conſidered as a ſign from
Heaven; and was perſonified by the poets
under the character of a Meſſenger between
their feigned gods and men. But ſhould
that appearance which, although from the
defect of their information it cauſed them
to entertain ſuperſtitious opinions, and to
run into idolatrous practices, plainly made
a deep


SERM. a deep religious impression on their minds,
XIV. be so frequently seen by us, who are acquainted with the everlasting covenant of which it has been appointed the sign, without recalling to our remembrance that hand, by which the whole system of Heaven and earth is supported? Or should we suffer the several seasons continually to revolve in their regular succession, without devoutly acknowledging, how much we owe to God for causing seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, ceaselessly to succeed each other?

That we may be guiltless of an omission so ungrateful at the present season, which seems particularly to call for our praise and thanksgiving, because it is that which crowns the rest, by bringing into our garners those fruits of the earth, to the production of which all the other seasons in their turns contributed, I have selected the words of the text for the subject of my present address to you; purposing to make use of the opportunity which they afford me, of remind-

reminding you how necessary the several SERM.
periods mentioned in the words before us XIV.
are for carrying on the great work of vegetation, and conducting the plants, by which the animal world is supported, through the various stages of their growth, from the first appearance of the blade, to the time when they are ripe for the harvest; and thence to proceed to state to you some practical inferences, which naturally arise from a review of this portion of the divine wisdom and goodness towards us.

I may justly, I think, suppose, that there is no man who, when he either casts his eye upon the fields before the sickle is put to them, or sees the reapers scattered over the land, or observes the wains groaning under the loads which they are bearing to the barn, does not feel his soul affected with a sense of the bounty of that hand which thus scatters plenty over the earth, and of the greatness of Him, Who hath so framed it, that it is thus abundant in its productions. But to those who are not unaccustomed

SERM. accustomed to contemplate their Creatour's

XIV.  works as such, and meditate on the traces of infinite wisdom and goodness discernible therein, these objects, as opening a still wider field for observation and praise, yield much greater delight. Yet the full satisfaction to be received from them cannot be enjoyed even by such, unless they take into consideration various circumstances which are wonderfully combined for forwarding and conducting to its due perfection every plant the earth produces. Our present review must be principally confined to what the several seasons contribute to these ends.

Of the seasons, then, that which may, to a superficial observer, appear adverse, is, in reality, friendly to vegetation, the very winter itself performing a part of essential importance towards the plenty of the ensuing seasons. Vegetables draw merely from the earth itself much less of that which supports and enlarges them, than is, probably, by most men imagined. The chief part of their nutriment is conveyed
by


by water: and the air contributes much to SERM.
their preservation. Now of the former of XIV.
these elements, the winter yields the great
supply by its rains and snow; while by its
winds and frosts it purifies the latter. Ne-
cessary is that abundance of the first which
then descends upon our lands; both as to
its quantity, being the principal portion of
the stock from whence the encrease of the
future year is to be supplied; and as to its
quality, it having acquired by the natural
process it has gone through, of exhalation
from the earth, and of impregnation in the
air, all the softness and penetrating powers
which render it capable of promoting their
growth, and rendering the plants prolifick.
And without the winds and frost, vegetable
as well as animal life would suffer much
from that impurity of the air which these
contribute to remove. While the latter of
them penetrating into the ground does,
when on the approach of spring it is re-
solved, break its clods, and prepare it for
the reception of seeds, and render it easy to
be penetrated by the first tender fibres which
the

SERM. the roots put forth : and the former quickly
 XIV. drying from the branches of the trees, the
 { superabundance of that moisture (which,
 though necessary to the land, if suffered to
 remain on them, would render them diseased, and cause the bud in which the shoot is wrapped, to rot) prevent great and wide-extending damage.

The soil being thus prepared by winter, the seed time next succeeds, mild in its temperature, neither impeding vegetation by intense cold, nor scorching the infant plants by the excess of its heat ; bringing with it frequent showers to water the newly-sown land, and gales, which shaking the plants, not only loosen the earth about their roots, thus forwarding their growth, but agitating so strongly the trunks, branches, and leaves, promote a freer circulation of the sap contained in them ; and thus throw off whatever being unremoved might diminish their vigour, and obstruct their growth. The luxuriance of this period affords a covering to the ground against the heat of
 the

the ensuing season, and intercepting, by SERM.
innumerable leaves, the rays of the sun, XIV.
cause their power to be spent on those parts
where it is most necessary, while the roots
kept cool are able to perform their function,
and supply additional nourishment, until
the fruit arrived at its due size no longer
needs such.

To bring this to pass, however, summer
funs are necessary, by which the juice of
the plants undergoes, as it were, an higher
distillation, whereby is produced that fine
flour with which the seed vessels are first
filled, and which, by the continuance of
the heat drying away the leaves that cover
them, is afterwards consolidated into a body,
and forms the seed itself: and which seed,
if not gathered now by man, having by
the same means that coat which contains it
dried until it bursts, falls to the ground for
the supply of plants for the ensuing year.
Thus wonderfully is the succession of sea-
sons constituted to bring the fruits of the
earth to that perfection in which they are
gathered,

SERM. gathered, and made the support of animal
XIV. life. In warmer climes, indeed, the annual
 revolution proceeds not through the same
periods ; but that purification of the air of
which their inhabitants would otherwise be
deprived through want of the winter's
frosts, is for them provided by means of
more violent rains, of lightning, and of
hurricanes. While the products of their
lands require greater heat to bring them to
maturity ; and without such fruits, wisely
and mercifully suited to their climes, they
would soon perish from countries on which
the sun directly darteth down his rays.

Neither should we pass, without obser-
vation, the utility of the shorter periods of
day and night, and their mutual succession
to the same important end, the growth of
every plant. Those vessels which the heat
of the sun had, during the day, caused to
expand, and not only supplied with sap
from the root, but opened their numerous
pores to receive the dews which fall on his
descent, being, by the coldness of the night,
rapidly

rapidly compressed, thereby force the juices SERM.
with which they are filled every way, and XIV.
make the buds to shoot. And hence it is
that all vegetables grow more by night than
day; except, perhaps, during showers,
when the rain fills the pores, and its cold-
ness does the office of the night air.

Thus have all the various vicissitudes to which our atmosphere is subject to their use, and thus necessary to all who dwell on the earth, is the constant continuance of the divine determination mentioned in the text, “While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.” Is it not ours, therefore, by reflecting on what God herein doth for man, to strive to learn what it becomes us, under the receipt of these continued mercies, on our part to do?

Behold then, first, the call and encouragement here holden forth to unwearied diligence in our labour: since in every step we

SERM. take, God is working with us, amply re-
XIV. warding all our pains by the fertility to
which His seasons give birth, and yet having
so constituted the earth, that in proportion
as man ceases to exert himself, his supply
of food decreases. This lesson, as shewing
how greatly an idle life differs from that
which our Maker would, that we should
lead, merits both the most serious attention
of individuals, who very frequently seem
to think, that they are at liberty to spend, or
rather to waste their time in sloth, or what
is next to sloth, the most trifling amuse-
ments, provided they injure not others ; as
if He who, in the material world, hath
made nothing but to a good end, had yet
endowed man, the creature to whom He has
put so many others into subjection, with all
his wondrous powers of actions for none ;
and the consideration of communities, which
sometimes overlook that which, if duely
attended to, would preserve in them a mea-
sure of good order, integrity, and happi-
ness, which, I much fear, has by this in-
attention, departed from our own country
never

never to return ; that God hath, in His SERM.
natural world, taught the same thing which XIV.
His apostle Paul delivers in the form of a
precept : “ For even when we were with
you, this we commanded you, that if any
would not work, neither should he eat.”

Another point, suggested by the review we have taken, is that of our utter dependence on the goodness of God. Unless He were mindful of His covenant for ever, and of His promise from generation to generation, the Heavens over our head might be as brass, and the earth under us as iron : we might carry out much seed into the field, and bring but little in : we might plant vineyards and dress them, but neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes from them. Reflections of this kind are too seldom made, and too little encouraged among men. Content with knowing the more immediate causes by which they are supplied with food and raiment, they look no farther, but, in the language of holy writ, sacrifice unto their net, and burn in-

SERM. cense unto their drag. Yet this our dependence is not such that the recollection of it need either hurt our pride, or lessen our security. To be the objects of a monarch's favour, or flattering to the mind; to have the support of sovereign power, naturally raises confidence. When the blessings we enjoy, flow from the benevolence of the King eternal, almighty, invisible, the only wise God; when it is by the word of the Father of all mercies, with Whom there is no variableness, or shadow of turning, that we live; as our obligations encrease in proportion to the greatness and constancy of our benefactor. For what other sensation is there in this case room, than that of the sincerest gratitude? of gratitude, leading us not to conceal, but to proclaim how greatly we are indebted to Him: not, indeed, by ostentation in our religious acts, but by an unremitted attention to His laws, by readily joining in those publick acknowledgements which His church renders, especially those of the sabbath, (His own appointment of which makes the neglect of
it

it an act of positive disobedience, of real SERM.
revolt from His authority) and by teaching XIV.
our households, and our children after us,
to love and to fear Him, as their Maker,
their Preserver, and their Judge.

Neither do the improvements of the subject before us stop here. By reflecting on the never-ceasing bounty of Heaven to ourselves, there is an hope that our hearts may be softened into benevolence towards our brethren: from the measure with which it has been meted unto us, we may learn to measure unto others, and be ever after our power ready to give, glad to distribute; and from observing how our heavenly Father maketh His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust; giving even to men who walk in their own ways fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, we may discern the superior glory of loving our enemies, blessing them that curse us, doing good to them that hate us, and praying for them which despitefully use us,

SERM. we may become the children of our Father

XIV. which is in Heaven.

But yet, further, if God hath made such bountiful provision for the sons of men as to external goods, Can it be believed, that He would leave the race abandoned in other respects, and not furnish them with what is no less important to their happiness, instruction in the truth, the food of the mind? Yet, if our Gospel come not from Him, this He must have done; Or, if the effects of His benevolence be so great in this transient and uncertain state, How gloriously must they shine forth in the everlasting kingdom prepared for those who love Him? Reasoning after this manner from what our merciful Creatour has done for us as to our natural, to what He will do for us as to our spiritual state, from the comforts with which He supplieth us during our short stay here, to what we may hope for in those mansions where we are to abide for ever, is making a wise and the proper use of the objects now before us, rendering them not snares to

to entrap our affections, and attach us to what we cannot keep, but subjects of encouragement to press forward to the high prize of our calling. Nor to this end are there wanting, in the holy scriptures, suggestions of a similarity between man in his temporal state, and the vegetables which he cultivates for his support. Like them, he is termed a plant ; like them, he is described as flourishing by the protection of the Almighty, and as withering when that is withdrawn : and, like them, (an observation especially adapted to the present season) as having, when ripe for the harvest, the sickle put unto him, and, if good, being gathered like wheat into the garner of the master, and, if bad, like weeds burnt with unquenchable fire. Let us therefore, when we look on the fields that are reaped, recollect, that the period is approaching in which the world will be the same ; and the things which now remain according to promise, will, according to promise, likewise be done away ; and the following words of Him that sitteth on the throne be fulfilled, “ Behold, I make all things new !”

SERM.

XIV.





SERMON XV.

ON THE SIGNS OF TIMES.


REV. III, 19.

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be
zealous, therefore, and repent.*

THE epistles to the seven churches of SERM.
Asia, contained in this and the fore- XV.
going chapter, have, by interpreters of great 
name, been supposed not to relate solely to
the state of those churches at the time when
St. John was commanded to send them, but
to contain, likewise, a prophetick outline of
the state of the whole church in general
during seven distinct periods, which were
to succeed each other between the time of
the apostle's receiving the revelation and that
of

SERM. of our blessed Saviour's coming again : and
 XV. this supposition is confirmed first, by the
 proclamation repeated at the end of each
 epistle, " He that hath an ear, let him
 hear what the spirit saith unto the churches,"
 so similar to the charge with which our
 Lord's discourse to His apostles on the signs
 of His coming again, as recorded by St.
 Mark, is closed, " And what I say unto
 you, I say unto all, Watch : " and, secondly,
 by the state of the church in these several
 periods having actually corresponded with
 the description of it contained in the
 epistles.

But if this be so, it will be natural to
 ask, Where is the period during which we
 ourselves live described ? In the epistle it
 may be answered, to the church of the
 Laodiceans, which is the last of the seven,
 and from which I have taken the words of
 my text, so justly descriptive of the cause
 of the afflictions now poured on Christen-
 dom, and of the only means by which we
 can render our prayers for their removal
 acceptable :

acceptable: “ As many as I love, I rebuke SERM.
and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and re- XV.
pent.” 

The cause, ye see, here assigned for the chastening of the Lord, is His love towards us; which moves Him to try all means to bring us to repentance, that we may not be condemned with the world; and since these chastisements consequently cannot be removed, until they have affected the counsels of His mercy, or we are become obdurate, and the objects of final judgements, the only means by which we can secure the acceptance of our petitions for the removal of them, must be those of sincere repentance and real amendment.

But there is, in the words before us too, a suggestion, that we do in one particular more especially stand in need of such amendment, that of religious zeal and heartfelt attachment to the cause of God and His Christ: “ Be zealous, therefore.” And whether the character given of the Laodiceans

SERM. ceans in this respect be as I have asserted,
 XV. applicable to the present generation of
 ~~~~~ Christians, and to us of this land among  
 the rest, ye may judge, from the particulars  
 of the epistle which I will now state to  
 you, compared with those points of our  
 own conduct, which I shall also call to your  
 remembrance.

“ I know thy works, (said our Lord to  
 this type of ourselves) that thou art neither  
 cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or  
 hot. So then because thou art lukewarm,  
 and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee  
 out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I  
 am rich, and increased with goods, and  
 have need of nothing; and knowest not  
 that thou art wretched, and miserable, and  
 poor, and blind and naked; I counsel thee  
 to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that  
 thou mayest be rich; and white raiment  
 that thou mayest be clothed, and that the  
 shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and  
 anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou  
 mayest see.”

Behold,

Behold, then, two characteristics here described; the one self-sufficiency, and the other that to which a conceit of our own worth and attainments so naturally gives rise, indifference to the service of our Maker: and consider with yourselves, whether the conduct of the present age be not strongly marked with both. In the whole history of the human race was there ever a generation that treated past times with the overbearing insolence that the present does? If we listen to the swarm of writers with whose works so many presses daily teem, would they not fain persuade us, that they are the enlighteners of mankind, and that all who have gone before them were, in fact, the slaves of ignorance, superstition, or error? and has not this malady spread like a gangrene? Is it not perceptible in the common conversation of the age? Has it not infected the language of the senate, the bar, and even of that where affectation should least appear, the pulpit? Nay, has it not descended to the artisan and the mechanic? who will tell you that the present

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**SERM.** are not like former times, when the people  
 { **XV.** were unacquainted with their rights, but  
 now they will think for themselves, being  
 as able to do so as those above them? On  
 questions of religion, indeed, our present  
 more immediate concern, it seems to have  
 shewn itself both earlier and stronger than  
 on any other. One sect has long prevailed  
 in Christendom, who having made an idol  
 of their own reason, find neither the words  
 of inspiration of sufficient authority, nor  
 the wisdom of God wise enough for them.  
*No* authority is too high for them to attack,  
*no* doctrine too important for them to reject.  
 Even the means by which God is pleased  
 to reconcile the world to Himself, must be  
 submitted to their judgement, and the opera-  
 tions of that eternal Spirit, who is above  
 all, through all, and in all, must accord  
 with their imaginations, and the nature of  
 their Creatour be to be comprehended by  
 these self-sufficient sophists, who think they  
 have no need of either atonement or grace.  
 The propagation of opinions like these,  
 among a generation already thinking them-

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selves

selves rich in knowledge, has proved like SERM.  
 adding fuel to fire, and every petty dispu- XV.  
 tant now thinks himself able to judge of  
 the decisions of the wisest who went before  
 him, and would have his rejection of their  
 judgement be considered as a certain proof  
 of the soundness of his own.

But while self-conceit has thus produced  
 a rage for innovation in every branch in  
 our own country, in what dreadful shapes  
 has it shewn itself, what havock has it  
 made in other parts of Christendom! There  
 the pretences of instructing, improving,  
 and exalting mankind to a degree which  
 those of past ages never knew, hoped, or  
 thought of, have affected the people like  
 an intoxicating potion, and their leaders  
 breaking down every ordinance that had  
 been deemed necessary for the preservation  
 of human society, destroying every thing  
 beneficial, have opposed and exalted them-  
 selves above all that is called God, or that  
 is worshipped, and discarding revelation,  
 have endeavoured to obliterate from the  
 minds

SERM. minds of men all recollection of their dependence on their Maker, by abolishing the  
 xv. observation of the sabbath, observed from the creation of the world in acknowledgement of it. And what is a novel occurrence among men, armed hosts have been marched from one sea to the other, not to plant a new religion among the nations; but to drive faith from the earth: while their commanders daringly vaunted their own apostacy and rebellion against Heaven, by shamelessly pretending to acknowledge the dissentient creeds of different countries, as long as such hypocrisy could forward their designs on those who dwell therein.

To lukewarmness in religion, to the decay of all sincere attachment to the faith, may the rapid progress of those pernicious opinions, of which such are the bitter fruits, be too in part ascribed; as well as that cold insensibility with which, for a long time, so many governments viewed their extensive diffusion. Although, indeed, the listless-  
 ness



ness which these betrayed, though by many SERM.  
ways loudly admonished of their danger, XV.  
and the blindness with which so great a  
portion of several nations have rushed to  
their own destruction, should seem to indi-  
cate, that the threatening contained in the  
passage of the text is already executed on  
them, and that the Lord hath already  
spued them out of His mouth: while His  
judgements on them are proceeding in the  
manner thus foretold by the prophet, “ Be-  
hold, the name of the Lord cometh from  
far, burning with His anger, and the bur-  
then thereof is heavy: His lips are full of  
indignation, and His tongue as a devouring  
fire: and His breath as an overflowing  
stream shall reach to the midst of the neck,  
to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity:  
and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of  
the people causing them to err.”

“ Suppose ye, (said our blessed Lord to  
those that told Him of the Galileans, whose  
blood Pilate had mingled with their sacri-  
fices) that these Galileans were sinners above

SERM. all the Galileans, because they suffered such  
 XV. things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye  
 ~~~~~ repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Thus

teaching us to reason from the divine judgments that overtake others, to the danger of our own state, from whom the same sentence is withholden only by the forbearance of God. When, then, we see “ the whirlwind of the Lord going forth with fury,” (Jer. xxxiv. 23.) and that “ a continuing whirlwind,” and have been warned, that “ it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked,” Does it not become us to consider, whether we ourselves be not in truth of that description? When, too, the portion of punishment that has reached us does not exceed the measure of rebuke and chastisement, while on so many others it has been extended even to destruction, Does it not behove us to make use of the time granted us by the divine mercy, and examine how far we partake in that guilt which is menaced with overwhelming indignation from Him? “ So, then, because
 thou

thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." SERM.
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Now if we fairly consider how far we have manifested this disposition, shall we not find that it has been long working among us: from those who have affected to consider religion as a mere instrument of policy, contributing to the tranquillity and easy government of the state, to those who have imagined all modes of faith equally acceptable in the sight of God, provided they are professed with equal sincerity? Shall we not find that it shews itself in a lamentable and extensive neglect of the means of religion? The fact itself cannot be disputed. Family devotion is fallen into I am afraid, I may say, general disuse: the attendance in the assemblies of the church, even on the Lord's day, is extremely small in proportion to the number dwelling in the different parishes, and what a still greater disparity is there between those who come to church, and the few, the very few, that are found willing to join in commemorating

SERM. the death of our Saviour until His coming
 XV. again! And can ye think this conduct is—
 Can ye venture to give to it the name of
 zealous? Be not deceived: our Lord re-
 quires it of us to seek the kingdom of God
 and His righteousness *before all* things.
 This ye know. Say, then, whether ye do
 not pursue the means of temporal prosper-
 ity, of worldly good, with more earnest-
 ness, with greater warmth, than ye thus
 cultivate the means of religion? For if ye
 do, your own hearts will convict you of
 want of zeal as to the latter; and “if our
 heart condemn us, God is greater than our
 heart, and knoweth all things.”

The publick character of a country is so
 generally thought to be affected by the pre-
 vailing manners of its inhabitants, that we
 reason with confidence from the former to
 the latter: May we not thus then argue,
 that the neglect into which are fallen many
 salutary laws, enacted for the preservation
 of the morals of the people in this country,
 the general inattention of the magistrates
 to

to the execution of such statutes, and to SERM.
the whole of that portion of their duty, XV.
and the discouragement and opposition with
which the few who would perform it meet,
indicate a general indifference of the inhabitants of the land to the preservation of a conduct suitable to the profession of the Gospel, and that prophaneness and blasphemy, sabbath-breaking and drunkenness, impurity of every kind, and that potent enemy of every virtue, gaming, are deemed among us crimes of not sufficient magnitude to merit animadversion. When the legislature of a country is apprized that its former laws are either so fallen into disuse, or by the discovery of new evasions, are so eluded, as no longer to answer the purposes for which they were originally made, if there be any earnest desire, any real intention to effect those purposes, if there be any zeal, the laws deficient will be immediately re-enacted, or amended; and where such laws relate to the preservation of christianity among a people, their being permitted to become useless, is in itself no


SERM. weak proof that the community in which
 XV. they once were executed is become lukewarm in the faith of Christ. But should such legislature absolutely refuse (as has lately been the case among us) an application expressly made for the amendment of laws for the securing the honour due to God; What is this but saying, we will not that He should reign over us? And then, alas! unless humble acknowledgement, the sincerest repentance, and early amendment prevail, to have the provoked judgement averted, can shepherds like these expect a sentence less severe than that which the Lord pronounced against the husbandmen of His own vineyard, that “the kingdom of God shall be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof?”

Again; it is far from consistent with zeal in the service of a king to suffer his subjects to be seduced from their allegiance by the propagators of doctrines contrary to his authority, a remark confirmed by the
 practice

practice of our own legislature, which has SERM.
enacted statutes for the repression of those XV.
who preach disaffection, or spread sedition
in the nation. But has the same care been
shewn in the cause of the King of kings?
Has not, on the contrary, the circumspec-
tion which our forefathers used on this
point, been laid aside, and some of the pro-
visions which their wisdom made, been re-
voked with scarcely the shadow of a reason,
and a door been thus opened to the teachers
of that corrupted church, from whose abo-
minations our ancestors were zealous to
cleanse, and to preserve their country? And
have we not thus contradicted the warning
voice which cries, “ Come out of her my
people, that ye be not partakers of her sins,
and that ye receive not of her plagues ;” and
even at the time when her sins have reached
unto Heaven, and God appears by the judge-
ments that are now falling on the countries
of her communion, to have remembered
their iniquities, Have we not proclaimed,
“ Return to her ye who will, for no harm
shall happen unto you ?” And can we

SERM. wonder if after this, something more than
 xv. mere want of zeal in preserving the purity
 of the Gospel among us, the plagues poured
 upon her reach, in their effects, even to
 ourselves?

The affectation of generosity of mind, (termed in the spurious language of the present day, liberality of sentiment) superior to that of former ages, manifested in this case, is, in fact, an instance of that self-conceit, by which our age is characterized in the prophecy before us. If ye listen to our professions, we possess more Christian charity, have juster notions of religion, and hold sounder maxims of policy, than the generations before us: yet attend to facts, and we have, in the first place, shewn our Christian charity, by proving ourselves much less solicitous about the future salvation of our people: in the second place, the juster notions of religion we possess, are manifested by our attending less to the only source of sure instruction in it, revelation, by our neglecting the means of
 it,

it, and exposing ourselves to be blown about SERM.
by every wind of doctrine, and letting the XV.
influence of it appear less on our practice: 
and, lastly, the soundness of our policy is
made known by our again introducing to
our country, those through whom the liberty
of it was before nearly overthrown, and
opening a door to offences which we see
have produced consequences of the most
lamentable and fearful kind in various
others. And now, arguing from these pre-
mises, on the truth of which ye may your-
selves determine, which character is, in
reality, most applicable to us, that we give
ourselves in saying, we are rich and en-
creased with goods, or that supplied by the
passage of Scripture we are considering,
“Thou knowest not that thou art wretched,
and miserable, and poor, and blind, and
naked.”


In truth, nothing is more likely to lead
either individuals or nations to think highly
of themselves than an increase of earthly
treasures: the observation is in every body's
mouth,

SERM. mouth, and general experience confirms it.


XV. When the land of Judah was replenished
 ~~~~~ from the east, its inhabitants had the harp  
 and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine  
 in their feasts : but they regarded not the  
 work of the Lord, neither considered the  
 operation of His hands. Yet had they the  
 writings of Moses which threatened them  
 with all the curses written in his law,  
 whenever they forsook the testimonies of  
 the Lord their God : and the Lord, too,  
 had begun to cut the neighbouring king-  
 dom of Israel short for the transgressions  
 committed in it. Thus, too, have we seen  
 the wrath of God fall on the nations near  
 us, while, by the passage of the text, and  
 many others, we are warned of the evils  
 that must overtake us, if we do not repent.  
 The correction we at present feel has, in a  
 manner that calls most loudly for our admi-  
 ration and our gratitude, fallen principally on  
 that of which we are proudest, which has  
 contributed mostly to our corruption, and  
 principally damped our zeal, I mean our  
 wealth. As if the long-suffering of the  
 Lord

Lord would kindly point out to us by this SERM.  
mean, how little that to which we are so XV.  
much inclined to trust, can help us in the  
day of wrath. And shall this kindness  
make no impression on our hearts? Shall  
not these instances of His love induce us to  
strive to make ourselves more worthy of  
it? Shall not these fatherly rebukes and  
chastisements make us zealous and repent?

The blindness which has, in part, hap-  
pened unto us, and which prevents our see-  
ing how miserably we have departed from  
the line of conduct prescribed by the Gos-  
pel, can only be removed by the true light;  
And can we hope that that light will mani-  
fest Himself unto us, unless we *zealously*  
seek for His illumination? Do but, with  
the little strength ye have yet remaining,  
apply yourselves earnestly to practise all  
which ye already know to be the duties of  
religion: give in reality that preference to  
the things belonging to the kingdom of  
God, which a very little consideration will  
convince you is justly due unto them; and  
be


SERM. be assured, that to the earnest prayer which  
XV.  forms part of those duties, ye will meet  
with such returns as will open your eyes to  
our real situation, not only in regard to the  
unrighteousness of our own behaviour, but  
in respect likewise to the urgent calls now  
made on us to repent without delay, because  
the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

When our Lord rebuked the Jews because they could distinguish the signs of the weather, but were not able to discern those of the times, the period of the destruction of Jerusalem was not, I conceive there is reason to think, at many more years distance from that generation, than the time of His return to take vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not His Gospel, is from ourselves. I have already stated to you that the prophecy so descriptive of the period in which we live, is that which relates to the very last state of the church previous to that awful event: and the great characteristick I have pointed out, lukewarmness in religion, is especially noticed


ticed by our blessed Saviour, in the account SERM.  
of the signs of His coming, recorded by XV.  
St. Matthew; and encouragement not to   
give way to it, added to the mention of it;  
“ And because iniquity shall abound, the  
love of many shall wax cold. But he that  
shall endure unto the end, the same shall be  
saved.” While other symptoms of the end  
being near at hand encrease upon us. Of  
these it is ours to put one another in mind,  
and rouse each other to be zealous in pre-  
paring to meet our divine Master; both  
from the consideration that we must be left  
without excuse, if after such warnings of  
its approach that day overtake us unawares,  
and we be found drowned in the cares or  
pleasures of life, smiting our fellow-ser-  
vants, or eating and drinking with the  
drunken: and from the glorious prospect  
of the honour and happiness that those will  
inherit, who resolutely adhering to the  
words of Christ, during the trials that re-  
main to be undergone, shall either die in  
the Lord, or tarrying until He come, be of  
Him

SERM. Him found watching, and made, according

XV. to His promise, rulers of all His goods.



In discharge, then, of this my duty, I have now declared unto you, brethren, that this is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist should come, even now there not only are many Antichrists, but that power which the spirit of prophecy especially pointed out as Antichrist, and which is not to be finally destroyed until the coming of the Lord Himself, I mean, that of the pope of Rome, who, by calling himself the vicar of Christ, took to himself this title in one sense of it, as it belonged unto him in another, because he opposed the true doctrine of our Lord ; this power, I say, has now continued very nearly the whole time expressly assigned to him : while such is the present situation of things, as to render it reasonable to suppose, that something very important in his history will very soon take place. Another power too, that of the Turkish empire, on the removal of which the last very few years of suffering will  
commence,

commence, seems to hold his present station SERM.  
at the will of two neighbouring monarchs XV.  
more powerful than his self, and who too,   
may plead the example of their predeces-  
sors, for dividing neighbouring dominions  
between them: and whenever this power  
be removed, those days will actually begin  
that are shortened for the elect's sake; and,  
consequently, the sign of the Son of man  
very quickly appear in the clouds of Hea-  
ven. When then, He is, as it were, even  
at the doors, what counsel can we take but  
that of the text, "Be zealous, therefore,  
and repent?"

Let me then, in the last place, exhort,  
nay, let me beseech you, not to reject this  
counsel, as ye would wish for support un-  
der the encreasing afflictions of the present  
time, as ye would wish to avoid evils in-  
comparably severer, and which must endure  
for ever and ever: as ye would wait with-  
out horror for the appearance of your al-  
mighty Judge, and receive from Him  
crowns of glory and immortality. For if  
these

SERM. these considerations will not prevail with  
XV. you, I have no more to add ; but must conclude with the impressive words of Moses,  
“ Behold, I have this day set life and death before you, therefore chuse life, that ye may live !”



# SERMON XVI.

ON THE NATIVITY.

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ST. LUKE II. 11.

*For unto you is born this day in the city of  
David a Saviour, which is Christ the  
Lord.*

THESE words contain what the hea-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
venly Messenger announced to the <sup>XVI.</sup>  
shepherds, as “good tidings of great joy  
to all people.” On what account they were  
so, I have before explained to you in a dis-  
course on the predictions relating to the  
Messiah: and in that, too, I laid before you  
the characteristicks by which this great  
person might certainly be distinguished,  
whenever He should appear. However  
VOL. III. x adapted,

SERM. adapted, therefore, those points may seem  
XVI. to a discourse on this day, or how properly  
~~~~~ forever coming under the words of the text, I shall not now speak to them again, but make it my present business to enquire into the ground and meaning of the title of Christ here given to the Saviour, and into the relation indicated to subsist between Him and us, by the term Lord ; and close my address to you with considering what obligations that relation confers on us.

Now the term Christ being, as is well known, a Greek word, equivalent to the Hebrew word Messiah, and both signifying anointed, it became particularly applicable to the Saviour, because He was to be invested with three offices, to each of which, under the law, admission was given by unction ; those of priest, prophet, and king : and because, too, He was to receive an unction before unknown in the world, that of the Holy Ghost, which descended on Him in a bodily shape.

That

That the priests were anointed to their office, we learn from the divine commandment to Moses, preserved in the fortieth chapter of the book of Exodus, which runs thus: “ And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office:” and that the Messiah was to bear this character, was foreshewn by the word of the Lord in the mouth of the psalmist; “ The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck.” A point worthy of particular attention, because, as the apostle to the Hebrews argues, if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (under which the Israelites received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedeck, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. And thus are we supplied from their own scriptures with a refutation of the Jews’ conceit,

SERM. that their ceremonial law was not to be
XVI. abrogated by the coming of Christ. As
~~~~~ long as the authority of that law continued,  
no one but a descendant of Aaron could  
minister in the priest's office; and carefully  
did the individuals of the family preserve  
their genealogy; while the fate of Korah  
and his company held forth a most awful  
warning, that no man who was not duely  
called, should presume to take this ministry  
to himself: but Christ was announced as  
appointed to the priesthood, after an order  
in which there was no mention of father,  
or of mother, or of descent; the ministry  
of which was not confined to a particular  
people, but, like the salvation promised by  
this High Priest, to extend to the Gentiles,  
and reach unto the end of the earth. And  
as the priest's office was to offer sacrifice,  
and make intercession and atonement for the  
people, entering once a year into the Holy  
of holies, for the performance of the most  
solemn act of this last, so our blessed Lord,  
having by one offering of Himself, per-  
fected for ever them that are sanctified,  
entered

entered into the Heaven itself, where He liveth for ever to make intercession for us. Since, then, to the thoughtful son of Israel, there must have appeared in the sacrifices which were continually offered, in the blood of bulls and goats, no natural efficacy to take away sins, and yet he was sure that these offerings were not the offspring of human fancy, but the ordinances of divine wisdom, had it once been suggested to him, that the benefits attached to these were so merely on account of their relation to better things to come, Would he not with joy have received the explication, and gratefully viewed the beautiful correspondence between the emblematical institutions of the law, and the mercies of God, unveiled in the Gospel? Some such were found in the generation to whom Christ his self preached: and the prejudices of the present Jews will scarcely be met with so great promise of success in overcoming them, as with arguments drawn from the types of the Mosaic law: by such arguments we may triumphantly prove, that in Jesus these were fulfilled,

SERM. filled, and that He was ordained of God  
 XVI. first, as there could be no remission with-  
 ~~~~~ out blood, to put away sin by His own  
 blood, and then to appear in the presence of
 God for us, an High Priest for ever, after
 the order of Melchisedeck.

Of the introduction to the prophetick office by unction, an instance is preserved in the history of Elisha, whom Elijah was commanded to anoint to be prophet in his room; and as we find no other instance of the kind recorded, yet are told that a double portion of the Spirit rested on that prophet, we may well presume, that by this peculiar distinction, it was designed to mark him for a type of Christ. The designation of this great person Himself under that character, is contained in these words of the Lord to Moses, to be found in the eighteenth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy; “ I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

him. And it shall come to pass, that who- SERM.
soever will not hearken unto my words XVI.
which he shall speak in my name, I will
require it of him.”

Now the office of a prophet, ye know, was not confined to that to which we at present generally restrain our ideas of it, the foretelling of future events; but extended to interpreting the will of God to the people: he resolved their doubts, he reproved them for their transgressions, he delivered to them, in the name of the Lord, promises of future blessings on obedience, and denounced judgements to come: he was (according to that sublime description of his appointment given to the prophet Jeremiah) “set over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.” In these several particulars, therefore, did our Lord act; He explained the real meaning of the law and the prophets, and made known the whole will of His Father to the people: He de-
x 4 clared

SERM. clared the approach of an everlasting kingdom, into which the righteous should be admitted; and menaced utter destruction to those who would not receive His gospel. He foretold the overthrow of Jerusalem, the extirpation of all His enemies, and the establishment of His church, its continuance, spite of every opposition, and its final triumph. How greatly He resembled Moses in several particulars, I have already stated to you in a former discourse; and that He spake also in His Father's name. I shall here only notice a solemn declaration He made of this last, which was peculiarly calculated to call to the minds of His hearers this characteristick of that prophet that was to come into the world: it is in the two concluding verses of the twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel; "For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me; He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." As He came not to condemn the world, but to save it,

it,

it, we read of but one act of severity during SERM.
His whole ministry, and that was executed XVI.
on a creature insensible to pain; the fig-
tree, I mean, which He cursed for its bar-
renness, in significant allusion to the sentence
gone forth against the ungrateful city that
made no return for all that the divine
husbandman had done unto it.

Further, too, as our Lord discharged the
office of a prophet in all these particulars,
so He demonstrated the justice of His own
claim to the character by that incontro-
vertible proof which was laid down in the
law, the completion of His words. The
manner of His own death, the success of
His gospel, the overthrow of the city and
temple, the sufferings of His followers, and
the history of His church, have all ac-
corded with His predictions concerning
them; and we challenge our adversaries to
produce a single instance, in which what
He hath really said, has not followed, nor
come to pass, and when they do, we will
acknowledge, that it was spoken presump-
tuously,

SERM. tuously, and that they need not be afraid of

XVI. Him.



It is so well known, that the monarchs of Israel were wont to be anointed for their royal dignity, that it is needless to quote texts in confirmation of this point, but that Christ was to hold this office, we learn from the psalms and the prophets; “The kings of the earth (saith David in spirit) have set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed—then shall He speak unto them in His wrath—yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” And in the thirteenth chapter of the prophet Jeremiah, “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.” And Zechariah, in words exactly describing our
 Lord’s

Lord's entrance into the holy city, " Re- SERM.
joice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; Shout, XVI.
O daughter of Jerufalem : Behold thy King
cometh unto thee : He is juſt, and having
falvation ; lowly, and riding upon an afs,
and upon a colt, the foal of an afs."

But here the prejudices of the Jews operate more powerfully than on any other part of the character of Jeſus. Having, from their eagerneſs to be delivered from the fervitude in which they had been ſo long holden, formed to themſelves a notion that Meſſiah the King was to appear from the firſt in power and great majeſty, and deliver them from all their enemies round about, they overlooked thoſe prophecies which ſpoke of the intermediate ſtate of humiliation, which deſcribed Him as laying down His life for many, as ransoming His people with His own blood, and through afflictions making His way to the glory that ſhould follow. Hence the croſs became the great ſtumbling-block ; and we have been queſtioned, How the dignity of
the

SERM. the Messiah was compatible with that?

XVI. Yet were there not wanting ensigns of sovereignty not only in the authority with which He commanded the winds and the sea, and they obeyed Him; but when He ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men: for those gifts, the exercise of which his enemies did both see and hear, manifested the perfect truth of all the claims He had made to be the Christ, the Son of God, and consequently, the King of Israel.

Having thus investigated the several reasons for which the title of Christ was applied to our blessed Saviour, and shewn, that to Him it belongs in the triple character of priest, prophet, and king, it remains to consider the relation which subsists between Him and us, indicated by His being in the text denominated The Lord, and the obligations thence arising on ourselves.

Now the term Lord includes under it that absolute dominion which arises from property.

property. His we are, as originally by SERM.
right of creation, so since by purchase, XVI.
being bought with a price, that of His
blood shed for our redemption. More par-
ticularly His we are by the Father's especial
appointment, who hath made Him both
Lord and Christ, and given Him all power
in Heaven and in earth. It is in reference
to this particular relation to us, that the
apostle tells us, that there is, as one God,
so one Lord, Jesus Christ: and by exam-
ple as well as precept, hath taught us to
look up to Him, as our immediate Protector
and heavenly Master; and these several
grounds of authority over us are all in-
cluded in the declaration of God's Messenger
in the text, That the Jesus, whose birth He
then announced, was Christ, The Lord.

Now the light in which we are thus taught
to consider our blessed Saviour, as our Master
and our Owner, is not restrained to this
world, but extends to that which is to
come, wherein, having taken account of His
servants, He will award each of them that
recom-

SERM. recompence for which his obedience or his
 XVI. disobedience, his fidelity or his faithlessness,
 manifested here shall call. What measure
 of obedience then, what degree of attention
 to His will is due to one whose authority
 over us is so justly founded, whose power
 is so unlimited? If He who endowed us
 with all our powers, require the service of
 them all, Is He demanding more than His
 own? And if, in some cases, He require
 us only not to employ them in the trans-
 gression of His law, yet have no attention
 paid to His call, must not those who thus
 refuse Him attention, be guilty of deep in-
 gratitude? If He who willingly laid down
 His life to ransom us from the powers of
 darkness, command us to take up the cross
 and follow Him, and be ready to lose our
 lives too for His sake and the Gospel's, Is
 He demanding any return which His pre-
 ceding kindness to us has not merited at
 our hands? If He, on whose word depend
 our present lot and our future sentence,
 warn us to shape our conduct, and regulate
 our conversation in this world, according

to directions He has left us, if His admo-
nitions be not listened to, What can we
expect from Him but the treatment due to
idle and disobedient servants, the loss of His
protection, and banishment from His house-
hold?

SERM.
XVI.


I can but think, that if Christians would take into consideration that connection which actually subsists between their divine Master and themselves, and duely ponder on it, no small alteration would be produced in their conduct; and instead of being carried away by the wildness of passion, or being lost in insensibility to every religious duty, they would from gratitude for all the great things He has done for them, for all the love He has shewn them, through fear of His almighty power, and His judgements extending to eternity, live in sobriety, and walk with circumspection: through sense of the high patronage with which they are blessed, be zealous in acting worthy of the vocation with which they are called, and fearful of forfeiting that rank to which His
love

SERM. love has given them the means of rising :
XVI. and really count all things but loss for the
excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus
their Lord : and therefore I would impress
on your hearts, that the festivals of the
church should never be permitted to pass
without recalling to our minds those great
instances of divine love which are commemorated on them. That of the present
season, the Son of God's coming into the
world, that whosoever believeth in Him
should not perish, but have everlasting life,
should turn our thoughts to the consideration of what a great difference there must
be between the condemnation from which
we may be delivered, and the life we may
obtain, that God should vouchsafe to send
so great a person to enable us to avoid the
one, and secure the other ? and of what
conversation becomes those for whom Heaven
hath shewn so much regard ?


In times of festivity, the heart and the
tongue are both too apt to transgress the
bounds of sobriety and temperance ; the
former,

former, elated with mirth, roves in its SERM.
imagination, and the latter rapidly pours XVI.
forth of its abundance : many are the words
then uttered which, in the moments of cool
reflection, vex the mind, and bring remorse
not only on account of the impolicy or folly
of them, but from their immorality and
impiety. It is not that the peril of falling
into sin at these seasons proceeds from reli-
gion being an enemy to cheerfulness, or
well-regulated mirth, but that men laying
aside that caution and restraint which our
degeneracy ever needs, suffer their spirits to
be so elated, and their passions so raised,
that the bounds of truth and modesty are
transgressed, and the dictates of reason gain
no attention.

Such ye must be sensible, in various de-
grees, are the trespasses into which men do too
often suffer themselves to be betrayed when
met together for the purposes of merriment
and feasting : and if it be with justice that
that we lament the folly, and reprove the
perverseness of those who, in any case, abuse

SERM. the favours they receive, when blessings
XVI. which flow more immediately from the
providence of God, as His corn, His wine,
and the companions He hath given us, are
turned into occasions of vice and immora-
lity, were we to encrease the rigour of our
rebukes in proportion to the ingratitude and
madness of the misconduct, language could
hardly supply terms strong enough to re-
present to the transgressors in this respect
the vileness of their offence; especially if
such transgressors are, at the time of their
offending, celebrating a religious festival.
We have no ground for joining in the joy
of seasons like the present but as Christians:
it is in them that we not only rejoice among
ourselves, but ought to assemble universally,
and do so in greater numbers, to celebrate
that institution which our blessed Lord has
left us in memory of Himself. Should we
then change these sacred seasons into times
of riot and licentiousness? Is not this pro-
fane rather than observing the feast of the
Lord? If we observe them not, (and let
it particularly be attended to that we do not
observe

observe them as Christian festivals, unless SERM.
we join in celebrating the supper of the ΛVI.
Lord) we must be guilty of the most un-
grateful insensibility of His inexpressible
love to us: and if, in our observance of
them, we copy not the examples of our
earliest predecessors in christianity, but pre-
fer rather that of the Gentiles in their ido-
latrous feasts, indulging in lasciviousness,
lusts, excess of wine, revellings and ban-
quetings, Is not this giving occasion to our
adversaries to mock and blaspheme? What
must enemies of the Gospel (the number
of whom by no means decreases) think of
a religion, for which the very disciples of
it have so little respect, that even while
commemorating the facts which passed at
the time of its first introduction among
men, they transgress its laws? How often
has it been objected to the doctrine we pro-
fess, “ Ye talk of its purity and its power,
But where is the reformation it has brought
about? Do we not see characters as dissol-
ute and profligate in the higher, as idle,
drunken, and dishonest in the lower ranks

SERM. of Christians, as among those of any religion?" Let me, I beseech you, when next
XVI.  I hear such questions put, not be obliged to recur to the general answer, " Many are called, but few are chosen ;" but enable me to glory at least in the instance of mine own household ; and to say, on your part, that neither my teaching, nor your faith, hath been vain. Then may we have great boldness not only in the presence of our adversaries, but in the day of the Lord ; together with rejoicing at His coming, Who having once appeared in humility to bear the sins of many, shall unto them that look for Him, quickly appear the second time unto salvation.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION.

TITUS II. 14.

Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

ST. PAUL, in his first epistle to Timothy, makes mention of some, who having put away a good conscience, had also made shipwreck of faith; which is (though it may be hoped not in a very high degree) yet it is in some measure, the case of all those who continue in the practice of sin; since the true faith of the Gospel, and the transgression of the commandments of God, are

SERM.
XVII.

v 3 entirely

SERM. entirely inconsistent: for no man being
 XVII. willing to bring evil on himself; while
 those punishments with which the Gospel threatens the disobedient (be their excuse for their disobedience what it may) are sincerely believed, no man will subject himself to them; therefore when temptations arise, if the imaginary pleasures of sin allure, men immediately begin to look out for some hopes of escaping the penalty annexed, though they commit the crime; and this search is conducted in different methods, according to the difference of constitution, sense, and knowledge, that are to be found in men. Some of bold spirit, and a little information, (which is often worse than none) being on the one hand sensible, that if the Christian faith be well founded, there can be no hope for those who do not depart from iniquity, and, on the other, desirous of getting rid of all restraints on their pleasures at once, collect the several objections against the Gospel which have been raised by various infidels in several ages, and from the presumption that these may be just,
 take


take courage to reject it as a forgery and an SERM.
 imposition, as a fable cunningly devised by XVII.
 man, and not a revelation worthy to pro-
 ceed from God. Now of these men, we
 must at least say, that they appear to truly
 understand the terms of the Gospel-ac-
 ceptance, and to honour the dispensation so
 far as to confess, that under it there is no
 security for vice. But there are others who
 equally backward to deny themselves the
 gratifications that are forbidden, yet either
 having the chief articles of the faith more
 deeply imprinted in their minds by educa-
 tion, or being of a less daring and more
 scrupulous disposition, do still continue to
 believe the truth of revelation in general;
 while they embrace opinions which are to-
 tally inconsistent with *that* of particular
 parts of it; in pursuance of which, they
 allow themselves with no apprehension of
 the wrath of God in practices that not only
 militate against some of His most express
 commands, but are diametrically opposite
 to the spirit of christianity; manifesting
 thereby, that though their faith continue

SERM. indeed with regard to the facts recorded in
 XVII. scripture, yet it is somewhat impaired with
 ~~~~~ respect to the truth and importance of all  
 its doctrines.

The consideration of the equal danger of these different errors will, I persuade myself, induce you, without further exhortation, to give me your attention while I set before you the doctrine of the text, which, if duly weighed, and faithfully retained, will be found a most desirable antidote to both.

The ends for which our blessed Saviour submitted to death were, as the apostle tells us, “to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And will the most confident of unbelievers presume to affirm, that this was a work so unworthy the Son of God to undertake, that the history of it is not to be believed? Was it needless? Or was it unimportant? Or does it manifest to us any attribute in the Deity,  
 which



which the works of nature do not teach us SERM.  
to acknowledge? Were not all men before XVII.  
the coming of Christ in such a state that,   
to use the language of scripture, they came  
short of the glory of God? Were they not  
ignorant of the dignity of their own na-  
ture, and of the purity and majesty of the  
divine; and of the great and necessary  
functions of religion? And did not their  
ignorance, in these respects, lead whole na-  
tions into such practices, that, if permitted  
to have continued, would have been a re-  
proach to the Governour of the world, and  
reflected disgrace on the Creatour of such  
beings? But an end could not have been  
put to these unless by either destroying  
mankind, or instructing them, and im-  
proving their reason (which had already  
shewn itself insufficient to guide them) in  
such a manner, as might still leave them at  
liberty to act as they would, while it gave  
them power to discover and pursue that  
course which was the right one. And  
whether it were more worthy of God to  
annihilate the race, or to afford them the  
instruc-

SERM. instruction and assistance they needed, let  
 XVII. any man judge!

But farther; justice and mercy are to be equally ascribed to God; and they both shine forth with distinguished lustre in his natural government of the world: to vice and intemperance are annexed as their natural consequences, disease of body, and uneasiness of mind: virtue and sobriety, on the contrary, do produce peace within, and health and vigour without. And are not the glorious attributes I have mentioned, displayed too in the redemption of mankind by Christ? Consider the matter as stated in Scripture, first viewing the leading fact both as mentioned there, and confirmed by observation, “ that man was created upright, a creature perfect in his kind, but did corrupt himself, and by doing what he was conscious he ought not to have done, acquired a degeneracy of nature. For God to have immediately interposed to have corrected this wilful depravity, without any satisfaction made on the part of man, would  
 have

have been rewarding sin, and holding forth SERM.  
encouragement to His creatures to trans- XVII.  
gress His laws ; it would have been acting  
totally inconsistent with justice, which de-  
mands as well that sin be punished, as that  
virtue be rewarded. The immediate de-  
struction of the race was prevented by the  
divine wisdom and mercy, foreseeing, that  
if an offer of salvation was made on certain  
terms, *many* would *embrace* it, and recover to  
their own everlasting felicity, that perfection  
of nature, which they had first missed of  
by their father's fall, and *that* in the punish-  
ment of those who might reject this gra-  
cious offer, the justice of God would be  
still more manifest, since their ingratitude  
and perverseness in refusing the proffered  
mercy would render them both, in fact, and  
in the eyes of all rational beings, totally  
undeserving of further forbearance. Now  
could it be unworthy of the Son of God to  
take a principal part in a dispensation which,  
like this, was calculated to advance both  
the glory of His Father, and the happiness  
of His creatures, “ wherein mercy and  
truth

SERM. Truth would meet together, righteousness  
 XVII. and peace would kiss each other?" If not,  
 ~~~~~ What have you to object to? Are you  
 offended at the kindness which your Saviour
 has testified in doing so much for you? Or
 are you angry at the Gospel, because it sets
 forth, in a still brighter light, those very
 attributes which natural religion teaches us
 to ascribe to God? Because it affirms that
 He is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity ;
 or that He is too just not to punish incorri-
 gible sinners ; or too good not to afford to
 those who will make use of them, oppor-
 tunities and means of repentance and reco-
 very?

But, perhaps, it is none of these singly,
 it is the whole of revelation together that
 you cannot digest ; there is something mys-
 terious and wonderful in it that you cannot
 account for, neither fully comprehend : And
 is it surprizing, that you cannot fathom the
 depth of the wisdom and goodness of God ?
 It is as high as Heaven ; What canst thou
 do ? It is deeper than Hell ; What canst
 thou

thou know? For once, then, lay aside the SERM.
opinion of your own understanding being XVII.
infinite! Pry not into secret things, for
they belong unto the Lord! but be content
to reason from what is already before you.
That it was not inconsistent with the ma-
jesty of God to make such creatures as men,
and provide for their temporal provision and
comfort; your present existence, and all the
enjoyments you have tasted, demonstrate;
Why then deem it impossible, that, after
He had made them, He should interpose to
rescue them from the evils their own folly
was bringing on them, and redeem them
from all iniquity? This redemption is but
an act of the same goodness that first gave
you being; and its agreeableness to the
character of God, is a pledge of the truth
of Scripture in ascribing it to Him. The
means made use of were, doubtlessly, sur-
prizing; But who will be bold enough to
say, that any others would have been ade-
quate to the purpose? a wonderful and
horrible thing had been committed; part of
the universe had rebelled against their Crea-
tour,

SERM. tour, and set his laws at nought. The eyes
 XVII. of all rational beings, capable of viewing
 and considering the dispensations of God,
 which the Scripture informs us many are,
 must have been immediately fixed on his
 dealings in this case; and we may well
 think, that the dispensation carried on to
 remedy the evil in such a manner, as to
 make His justice and mercy equally visible,
 in His dealings with us His fallen creatures,
 must have been miraculous on the whole;
 while we may justly presume, too, that one
 part of it would be, the purifying of those
 who were willing, from the corruption they
 had contracted, and restoring of them to
 such a state that their existence should be
 happy to themselves, and honourable to
 God—In the words of the text, “ Redeem-
 ing us from all iniquity, and purifying to
 Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good
 works.”

But if the work of redemption be pre-
 sumed to be adapted to the Son of God, in
 that it is the establishment of righteousness
 and

and felicity, upon the ruins of sin and misery ; How happens it, (it may be asked) that wickedness is still very prevalent in the world, when the knowledge of the Gospel is diffused more widely than ever ? To this we have to answer, “ That Christ came not to force, but to call sinners to repentance.” To all who would listen to this call, He offered such spiritual assistance as should enable them to subdue their evil affections, and obtain habits of true virtue and holiness. Many have rejected this offer ; many more have pretended to accept it, but proving unwilling to make the exertions required on their part, have received no benefit from it. Some few, however, in every age, have sincerely embraced it, and having passed through the proper season of trial, have been gradually transferred from hence, to a more happy state, there to wait God’s appointed time, when the number of His elect being accomplished, He shall completely establish His kingdom of righteousness. Then shall be the full manifestation of the sons of God ; and those
who

SERM. who have honestly used the means of purification obtained by the death of Christ, and turning from vice, have, through their own labour, made successful by His blessing on it, acquired a zeal for good works, shall be declared his *peculiar people*.

How many there may be of those now working out their salvation on earth, we know not. It is evident, indeed, that there are among us, numbers who belong not to that flock, since we can know them by the marks our Lord His self hath left us, “their fruits.” But whether all who do appear to the world to be zealous of good works are really so, must first undetermined until the secrets of all hearts be disclosed. And *these things* had the Gospel taught us, that all mankind should have become holy through Christ, might have been justly objected to it; but that, on the contrary, though it inform all men how they may become so, yet it always speaks of those who would behave like the true servants of Jesus, as a small number in
com-

comparison of those who would not, as— SERM.

“ a peculiar people.”

XVII.

To the description of which people, as given in the text and other parts of Scripture, I would particularly wish you to attend; for by seeing that the several declarations relating to them, all agree in giving them the same character, you will perceive that there is but one method of getting yourselves included in the number; which is a piece of knowledge not only important, but absolutely necessary: since there is no case in which the very common observation that we too easily credit, what we wish to be true, is more frequently verified than in this of religion; wherein men being desirous of obtaining salvation on the most easy terms they can, fondly receive those interpretations of particular passages that make the way to Heaven the shortest; and greedily listen to such teachers as, through folly, or impious craft, preach what is acceptable to their hearers, in lieu of what the Gospel contains.

SERM. Against the insinuating doctrines of these
 XVII. false teachers, arm yourselves with the following truths : “ That if Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity ; then ought every one who nameth the name of Christ, to depart from evil ; for he who does not, counteracts the purpose for which the Redeemer died, and renders vain with respect to himself the grace of God which hath appeared, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.”

That while we are told, that Jesus died to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, we are also taught by the same authority, that *that* purification is not brought about merely by the absolute power of God operating on the several subjects of it ; but, by His grace, co-operating with their sincere and strenuous endeavours. For on what conditions did our Saviour promise the Comforter to His disciples ? On that plainly of keeping His commandments..

“ If

“ If you love Me, said He, keep my com-
mandments ; and I will pray the Father,
and He shall give you another comforter,
that He may abide with you for ever.”


SERM.

XVII.

John xiv. 15. To whom did He promise to manifest Himself? and with whom said He, that His Father and He would make their abode, but with him who should keep His commandments? In what ground did He say, the seed of the word truly flourished, and brought forth fruit, but in *that* of a good and honest heart? *There may be*, who receive the word with joy, and keep it till temptation doth arise; *there may be*, who retain it a longer time, but in whom it is at length choaked with the cares, riches, or pleasures of this world; but *none of these* (I have the authority of our Lord for saying it) are of His peculiar people; *that* title belongs to those alone, who bring forth fruit with patience.

Therefore let not any man deceive you with vain words, or by persuading you to look within you for any fancied testimony

SERM. of the spirit, induce you to overlook the
XVII. apostolick rule, which is the only one that
may be depended on, for determining whether you are the Lord's.—“ That those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, together with the affections and lusts thereof.” To obtain for you the power to do this, was the end of Christ's submitting to death ; the recollection of which, one might imagine, would raise in us the will likewise. Reflect only on the wonderful fact which we this day commemorate ; the Son of God, after having condescended to take our nature on Him, stooping still further, and patiently passing through the lowest state of human misery !—Surely the different consequences of human conduct must be unspeakably important, that the knowledge of them should move so great a person as God to interpose, to turn us from the practice of sin to that of righteousness.—Whether we act according to, or against the dictates of our conscience ; whether we obey or break the commandments of God ; whether we walk in the narrow path of religion,

religion, and ramble in the broad ways of SERM. vice, can never be a matter of so slight XVII. moment as it is generally esteemed, since  errors of little consequence would not have called down the Son of God from Heaven to rectify them. Much less now He has appeared, can it remain indifferent which course we pursue; that of righteousness or that of iniquity; whatever He hath established concerning the ends of each, must remain fixed and immutable; and in not listening to the instructions He hath left us concerning them, we shall acquire the accumulated guilt of despising the plainest lessons, given by the highest authority, manifested by the mean through which they were delivered to be of the utmost importance, and recommended by the compleatest evidence of the sincere love and good-will of Him who gave them; "For greater love than this hath no man, that a man should lay down his life for his friends."

The sum of the whole is this; that the Scriptures, in declaring the end of Christ's

SERM. sufferings to be that He might redeem us
XVII. from all iniquity, and purify to Himself a
peculiar people, zealous of good works,
have given a reason for the wondrous fact
which at once cancels all the objections of
unbelievers, setting the divine wisdom, justice,
and mercy, in the most glorious and
amiable light; and at the same time takes
every hope of the partaking of the benefits
of His death, from all those who do not
entirely forsake the works of sin which He
came to destroy; and we, in pursuance of
the apostolick direction, do continue to teach
and remind you of these things; constantly
exhorting you, that if ye do indeed, as ye
profess to do, believe in God, ye be careful
to maintain good works, looking for that
blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of
the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

SER~

SERMON XVIII.

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE.

ST. LUKE XII. 32.


*Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

“ **W**HAT is man, that thou art mind- SERM.
ful of him? or the son of man, XVIII.
that thou visitest him?” was the exclamation of one whose own history yields a remarkable instance of the free goodness of God; from following the sheep-folds had he been taken, and seated upon the throne of Israel; numerous were the dangers he encountered, and as numerous the deliverances he experienced. The dependence he felt on the divine providence, in his private
z 4 fortunes,

SERM. fortunes, seems to have led him to extend
XVIII. his thoughts to the manner in which all
~~~~~ mankind enjoy the blessings of God's government: and the great things done for this favoured race, struck him with admiration, but by no means shocked his faith; although on minds not so strong, and less informed, the very circumstance which calls the most earnestly for our gratitude and love, the unspeakable condescension of the Lord, sometimes raises doubts as to its own reality, and men are backward to believe, that such as they are, can be objects of so much regard to the Sovereign of the universe.

To Christians who have any misgivings of this kind, the text contains a satisfactory reply; because convinced of the divine authority of Him who spake the words, they can no more doubt, that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom, than they can doubt of His power to perform what He wills. But the unbeliever may either except to the evidence  
given



given of its being the will of God, or say, SERM.  
that after all, the point itself is so incredible, XVIII.  
that nothing but an immediate revelation to  
himself should convince him of its truth.   
Now to enable you to refute his objections,  
which ever of these grounds he takes, I shall  
make it the business of the present discourse,  
to apply so much of the evidence of religion  
as I have already laid before you, to his  
exceptions in the first case; and afterward  
suggest to you a full reply to what is ad-  
vanced in the other.

In solution of the doubts, whether any  
attention is vouchsafed by the Deity to the  
human race in general, I first proved by  
appealing to your own feelings, that our  
Creatour hath implanted in our breasts a  
principle of religion in that indeterminate  
fear of some invisible Being which natu-  
rally arises in the human mind, and that,  
since a perfectly wise Being would never  
endow a creature with a faculty which had  
no object, the very existence of this fear  
within us is itself a proof, that He meant  
the

SERM. the race should preserve a connection with  
 XVIII. Him by acts of devotion. In further reply  
 ~~~~~ to the same doubts, I next stated to you,  
 that our own being, with such limited
 powers, and so precarious a mode of exist-
 ence, affords a demonstration that the race
 received its beginning from One mightier
 than themselves: and this constituting a
 proof from fact, that God did not think it
 unworthy of Him to make us, we may
 most confidently conclude, that after that
 He will not neglect creatures whom He has
 endowed with faculties to know, and serve
 Him.


In the next discourse, I laid before you
 the most manifest testimonies of the divine
 attention being extended to mankind, in the
 wonderful provision the Lord hath made
 for our support and comfort by the consti-
 tution of the material world; in which
 even many ill effects of our folly and ill
 conduct are provided against; these works
 evincing, that the Authour of them knew
 our necessities long before, and was able
 and

and willing to furnish a supply for them : SERM.
and I closed the consideration of this head XVIII.
of our heavenly Father's general care of
our race, by stating to you some leading instances of the divine interposition in great political revolutions, and the proofs afforded by these, that the Lord hath not relinquished the government of the earth, but ruleth in the kingdom of men, putting down one, and setting up another, according to His good pleasure.

Having thus furnished you with answers to doubts that can be raised only by the actual Atheist, it became requisite next to consider, those which may be started against that exceeding greatness of God's love to men which the Gospel indicates. Here then it was shewn, that the more wonderful the facts taught us by revelation are, the more impressible is the evidence God hath been pleased to provide of the truth of that revelation, selecting, by a most signal dispensation, one particular people to be signs unto the world : to whose history the attention

SERM. tion of the other nations of the earth hath
 XVIII. been called, after a remarkable manner, and
 ~~~~~ to the continuance of whose singular state  
 and wide dispersion we ourselves are eye  
 witneſſes. To this people were given ſta-  
 tutes and a courſe of diſcipline, which ren-  
 dered it more difficult for a mere pretender  
 to inſpiration to ſucceed among them than  
 among the inhabitants of any other country  
 on earth: and among them it was declared  
 ſhould appear that great Perſon, through  
 whom all the ſons of Adam might obtain  
 deliverance from the evils brought upon the  
 race by the diſobedience of the firſt pair  
 of it.

To this moſt important character were  
 the expectations of that and other nations  
 turned by a long courſe of predictions,  
 which ſo ſpecified all the particulars of His  
 lineage, His birth, His wondrous acts, His  
 extraordinary ſufferings, and His ſingular  
 triumph, that it was impoſſible the whole  
 number of theſe ſhould concur in any other  
 than in Him, who was the real object of  
 the

the prophecies: the nature of the salvation SERM.  
affirmed to be wrought by Him is such as XVIII.  
never could have suggested itself to the   
mind of any one unacquainted with the true  
history of mankind; and the remedies given  
for the corruption, the helps provided for  
the infirmities and wants of men, the man-  
ner in which their most intimate desires are  
met, and in which their presentiment and  
aspiration after immortality are accounted  
for, and objects worthy of their pursuit,  
and a scene of action adequate to their  
powers are disclosed, and the present myste-  
rious appearance of things explained, are  
such as could proceed only from the omnif-  
cience and authority of the Maker and  
Sovereign of the world. Neither can the  
performance of such great things for man-  
kind be accounted for but on the very mo-  
tive against which the objector points his  
doubt, the love of God to the works of His  
hands. That He should regard these is so  
far from incredible, that it is hard to be  
believed He should do otherwise; and that  
the love of the Lord should move Him to  
do

SERM. do those great things whereof we rejoice;  
 XVIII. the recollection of His abundant goodness  
 and unlimited power may easily convince  
 us: so that through these incontrovertible  
 truths we regularly come to the conclusion,  
 that “ it may be His good pleasure to give  
 us the kingdom;” and if it be so, Who  
 shall counteract it?

The difficulty which men find in believing that the Almighty does so much for the human race, generally, perhaps, arises from their reasoning concerning His works, according to the notions they have formed from the deeds of men. The acts of benevolence which these do to any under their patronage, must be limited in proportion to the bounds of their own power; but His power being infinite, and His goodness perfect, His kindness needs to be restrained only by the capacity of those on whom it is conferred; and, consequently, it can never be in itself incredible, that He will give the kingdom to those who shall be found meet to partake of such an inheritance.

But

But by some, it is said, that many ages SERM.  
are past since this inheritance was promised, XVIII.  
and still those who are said to be the heirs  
of it receive no distinguishing marks of  
being the peculiar favourites of Heaven;  
and hence arise other doubts as to the great-  
ness of the divine attention to them. Now,  
surely, those who hold it incredible, that  
men should be objects of the regard of the  
Almighty, can hardly object, that if He  
deign to make them such, He keeps the  
times and seasons of conferring His blessings  
on them in His own power. The objec-  
tion itself is, in reality, the same as that of  
the scoffers mentioned by St. Peter, “Where  
is the promise of His coming? for since  
the fathers fell asleep, all things continue  
as they were from the beginning of the  
creation:” and it merits the same answer,  
that the assertion it contains is not true, be-  
cause even in the material world changes  
have happened, not only since the beginning,  
but since the publication of the Gospel;  
and how many more in the moral! How  
many of those facts have come to pass,  
which

SERM. which our Lord and His prophets foretold  
XVIII. should intervene between the age in which  
they lived, and the end of the world ! And  
what is every accomplishment of a prediction relating to the church, but an additional proof that the fortunes of that church have been an object of His providence, Who can alone look with certainty into futurity ? Behold, then, the symptoms required ! To give a beginning to this kingdom among men, were, as I have shewn you, unnumbered miracles wrought ; the power of death was vanquished, and heavenly gifts were given unto men ; and to shew that it was the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom to the little flock that then made its first appearance on the theatre of the world, it was by spiritual assistance only enabled to baffle all the attempts which the greatest earthly powers made to disperse and destroy it ; and surviving all their efforts, gained possession of the imperial throne, receiving in this temporal a type of its everlasting triumph : and to preserve it from being overwhelmed by the most dangerous enemy  
of



of all, prosperity, were the corruptions con-  
sequent on that prosperity foretold, and the  
struggles of those who would not join in  
these corruptions described, and the judge-  
ments of God on such apostacy predicted;  
by the whole of which is formed a course  
of prophecies reaching to that period when  
He who gave the promise of the text hath  
told us, He will return to perform it, and  
take His servants to reign with Him.

Further, too, for the guidance of this  
flock while on earth, there have been given  
those laws which, in various other dis-  
courses, I have set before you, and which  
prescribe a conduct superior to all that the  
wisest of legislators, or of moral teachers,  
ever directed, or endeavoured to inculcate,  
and which is calculated to produce habits  
suited to a more excellent state than that in  
which we now are situated; and which  
habits we are told in the Scriptures that  
contain those laws, are required for the  
express purpose of rendering us fit to be  
admitted to that state.

SERM. When, then, such preparations have been  
XVIII. made for the establishment of this kingdom, What want of significant signs that it is the Father's good pleasure to give it to this little flock? Who could thus openly take a people from the midst of all nations, and form them into a permanent society, on principles beneficial not only to themselves, but to all around them, and adapted to the everlasting promotion of peace and happiness, but the supreme Dispenser of every good and perfect gift? And is not His doing this, His calling them to a conduct and conversation which so often must expose them to ill usage from the wicked with whom they cannot but be mixed here, a sufficient indication that it is in a future state that the virtues to which they are here trained shall be exercised with fruit to themselves, and those who are found faithful in a little here, be there made rulers over much?

Having thus reminded you of the answers with which the discourses we have gone through

through have furnished you to the objec- SERM.  
tions perverse or ignorant men may urge XVIII.  
against the testimony we have of its being  
the good pleasure of God to exalt the faith-  
ful followers of Christ to never-fading  
crowns of glory, let us now consider the  
last plea in which the unbeliever endeavours  
to find refuge, that the point itself is so  
incredible, that nothing less than an imme-  
diate revelation to himself should convince  
him of its truth.

Now this plea would be less unreason-  
able, were it ours to determine after what  
manner God should make known His will  
to men; but even then it would proceed on  
a mere presumption, that of the insignifi-  
cance of the human race in the eyes of their  
Creatour. For what is the ground of this  
imagination? here on earth all things are  
manifestly put in subjection under their  
feet: and what if there be innumerable  
worlds, inhabited by intelligent and moral  
beings, Will their number distract the at-  
tention, or exhaust the benevolence or power

SERM. of the Lord ; leaving but a little that He  
 XVIII. can do for men ? Or, to come still nearer to  
 ~~~~~ the point, What is it that makes one crea-  
 ture of more importance in the sight of our
 common Maker than another ? If there be
 any particular which does this, Is it not in
 the power of the Almighty to endow any
 species He pleases with it, and thus render
 them fit objects of His tender mercies ?
 And on what ground will you presume to
 assert, that the sons of Adam have not been
 thus blessed ? As far as human conjecture
 may venture to go, it should seem, that this
 consists in a capacity for happiness or misery,
 in the power of enjoyment or suffering :
 And who can say, that any beings possess
 this capacity in an higher degree than men
 do ? At least the very same Scriptures that
 teach us, that our heavenly Father vouch-
 safes so much regard, inform us likewise,
 that we are made for everlasting duration,
 and, consequently, are capable of never-
 ceasing happiness or misery ; and thus fully
 account for that tender concern which He
 manifests

manifests for our inheriting the future SERM.
blessings, and escaping the wrath to come. XVIII.

Lastly, then, be it granted, that on the theatre of the universe this globe of ours may indeed seem to beings, reasoning as we do, of little comparative importance, yet since God seeth not as man seeth, neither worketh as man worketh, but manifests His glory by effecting His purposes by instruments weak in themselves, and apparently inadequate, may He not have chosen creatures, mean as we are, to serve Him in some grand dispensation, in which beings of higher rank, nay, the whole universe, are concerned; and if He has, all doubts arising from the presumed insignificance of the human species in itself, fall to the ground at once, since it is not for our sake, but His own glory, that He hath chosen us. Nor is it merely supposition that He has so. We are informed in the sacred writings, that superior beings are by no means unconcerned spectators of the work of human redemption. We are not only

SERM. told by our blessed Saviour Himself, that
XVIII. there is rejoicing in Heaven over a sinner
that repenteth, but by St. Peter, that angels
desire to look into the dispensation; and
that angels, authorities, and powers, are
made subject unto Christ: and St. Paul asks
his converts, “ Know ye not that we shall
judge the angels?” The analogy of the
divine counsels in the Gospel, too, confirm
the same thing. In the whole of that His
strength was made perfect in weakness.
From the lowest ranks of a nation at that
time greatly despised, did the preachers go
forth to preach to the nations the doctrine
of Christ crucified; and, in the course of
its promulgation, not many wise men after
the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble
were called; but God chose the foolish
things of the world to confound the wise;
and God chose the weak things of the world
to confound the things which are mighty;
and the base things of the world, and things
which are despised, hath God chosen, and
things which are not, to bring to nought
things that are. That according as it is
written,

written, “ He that glorieth, let him glory SERM.
in the Lord.” XVIII.



An attentive reader of the Holy Scriptures will find many passages corroborating, and explaining the idea I have now suggested to you, that the consequences and effects of the Christian dispensation are not restrained merely to the sons of Adam. And what a scene is thus disclosed to the contemplative mind in the boundless extent, and inestimable importance of that scheme, in which a part is vouchsafed to every sincere disciple of the Gospel! Often has it been argued, that we see but a portion of the government of God; and, indeed, an apostle tells us, (doubtlessly intending something more than to make a trite observation) that we know but in part. If, then, according to what I have now stated, we have been made by God to shew forth His praise on a more extended theatre than the globe on which we ourselves dwell, the importance of our designation will solve many difficulties, and

SERM. clear many doubts, which men of partial
 XVIII. enquiry are apt to start.

In the first place, the faith of such need be no longer shocked at measures so great and extensive having been taken to call the attention of men to the truths of religion. For as when we learn, that the people of Israel were, from the first, appointed to be the instruments of the salvation of God to the ends of the earth, we no longer find it difficult to account for the share of the divine patronage which they have enjoyed ; when, according to the phrase of Scripture, He instructed them by His prophets, rising up early, and teaching them, so shall we no longer be surprized at the signal means used for the instruction of the human race in general, when we are informed, that from them are to be selected a chosen few to be exalted to a station conspicuous in the eyes of all created beings.

Neither will the greatness of the Mediator be a stumbling-block on account of the
 mean-


meanness of the race for whom He conde- SERM.
scended to submit to death, if it be con- XVIII.
sidered, that the consequences of this asto-
nishing instance of humility and love may
extend throughout the universe; and as, al-
though He was crucified by the Jews, He
died not for that nation only, but that also
He might gather together in one the chil-
dren of God that were scattered abroad; so
although He took not on Him the nature
of angels, but that of men, the glory of
His exaltation may be felt by all the heavenly
host.

Again; that which is in truth much the
most extensive cause of offence, the purity
of the laws, and the integrity of the mora-
lity of the Gospel, appear in this view of
things to be matter of absolute necessity:
for how should those who are not practised
in self-command be fit to be entrusted with
charges of importance. The question is
that of our Lord Himself; “ He that is
faithful in that which is least, is faithful
also in much; and he that is unjust in the
least,

SERM. least, is unjust also in much. If, there-
XVIII. fore, ye have not been faithful in the un-
righteous manner, who will commit to your
trust the true riches? And if ye have not
been faithful in that which is another man's,
Who shall give you that which is your
own?" The abuse or neglect of wealth,
opportunities and faculties with which we
are now entrusted, manifestly indicate, that
to consign to us more important trusts,
would be the dictate of neither wisdom nor
justice; and therefore are we exhorted so
earnestly to live soberly, righteously, and
godly in this present world. To the
thoughtless lovers of it, indeed, these ad-
monitions seem harsh, and being accustomed
to estimate the guilt of transgressions merely
by what others suffer through them, the
pernicious and destructive effects of the
personal vices are overlooked by them: yet
do but once seriously reflect, how totally
unfit those who have accustomed themselves
to make our heavenly Father's precepts of
righteousness give way to their passions or
their fancies, are to be advanced to stations
of

of higher honour, and of greater trust, and you will see a moral impossibility, that those who have passed their lives here in the service of sin or folly, should shine as the servants of God hereafter: and if this high prize of our calling may be lost through the transient gratifications of our bodily appetites, or of our corrupt inclinations of mind, through habits of intemperance or riot, of luxury or dissipation, How inexpressibly important, how worthy of the most anxious attention, are those lessons which direct us to consider these as enemies to our future glory and happiness, and to avoid them! And how truly do they manifest themselves to be the very dictates we might expect from Him, Who would that no man should perish, but that all should come to eternal life!

Under this view, how are the trials we here meet with dignified, and how truly wise, just, and kind, appear the exhortations given us to fight the good fight, and bear hardship like good soldiers of Christ,

SERM. that we may hereafter be crowned: and
XVIII.  when such crowns are certainly laid up for them, how reasonably may the faithful followers of the Son of God deem all their sufferings in this life not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in them. As, on the other hand, how severe will be the remorse, how bitter the anguish of those, who in that day shall find, that they are cut off from all inheritance among the people of God! This consideration is of itself, perhaps, sufficient to clear all doubts about the intenseness of the torments of the damned, without taking into the account the additional punishments which may be justly heaped on them, for their daring rebellion against their Creatour, and their ungrateful rejection of His proffered mercies. While the having secured a contrary lot for ever and ever must as naturally excite in the breasts of all, who receive a favourable sentence from the God of their salvation, a degree of rejoicing, and a permanency of happiness, by no means too highly described by
any


any of the emblematical descriptions I have SERM.
from the Holy Scriptures set before you, of XVIII.
the joys of the blessed hereafter.

What then remains, but to exhort and to beseech you all, as partakers of this heavenly calling, not to think scorn of the proffered inheritance, or, like Esau, profanely sell your birth-right for a mess of pottage: for to you belongs the assurance of the text, and to as many both near and afar off as the Lord our God shall call. True it is, that in comparison with the multitude to which it has been extended, few have obeyed this calling; and even against this little flock the most vehement and ceaseless opposition has been made by the children of the world, and the powers of darkness: but the effect of this opposition hath been only to manifest which are the true, which the pretended disciple of Christ, to separate the wheat from the chaff, to try the elect as the gold is tried, in the fire, and to confirm the assurance of the text, that it is the Father's good pleasure
to

SERM. to give them the kingdom, by the pledge
 XVIII. of this which His church has received in
 ~~~~~ the never-failing protection and support  
 vouchsafed unto it against all its enemies,  
 and under all its trials; until, in the pre-  
 sent age, that succession of signs which its  
 divine Master was pleased previously to  
 mark as symptoms of His return to take  
 account of His servants, being nearly run  
 out, the coming of our Lord approaches  
 fast, and He is now (almost without a me-  
 taphor) even at the doors.

What manner of men, then, does it be-  
 come us to be in all our conversation? Shall  
 we, conforming ourselves to the fashion of  
 the world, spend our time in rioting and  
 drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness,  
 in strife and envying; or putting on the  
 Lord Jesus Christ, make not provision for  
 the flesh to fulfil the lusts of that; but be  
 like servants waiting for their Lord?

By thus delivering you a word of exhor-  
 tation every Lord's day, I have so far en-  
 deavoured

deavoured to get myself numbered among SERM.  
those who shall be found not eating and XVIII.  
drinking with the drunken, or beating the   
man-servants and maid-servants, but giving  
them their meat in due season; if ye will  
not receive, and duely use this spiritual  
food, your future and everlasting portion  
must be with the unbelievers; but if we  
all honestly unite in hearing the word, and  
keeping it, then at whatever hour the Lord  
returns, we shall be found watching; and  
for our brief sufferings, our trifling labour  
here, be recompensed with that inestimable  
sentence, “Come ye blessed of my Father,  
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from  
the foundation of the world.”

FINIS.











